VV
a.
43 M

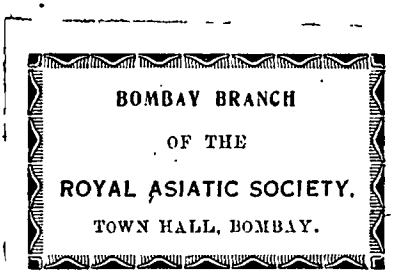
LECTURES ON THE SCRIPTURE REVELATIONS

PASTOR

God
220 · 12
Lec/Lec
97 84

00097184

B. B. R. A. E.



Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 15 March, 2016

LECTURES

ON THE

SCRIPTURE REVELATIONS

RESPECTING

GOOD & EVIL ANGELS.

BY

97184
a

A COUNTRY PASTOR,

AUTHOR OF

"LECTURES ON THE SCRIPTURE REVELATIONS RESPECTING A FUTURE STATE."

NN - 2 - 2

LONDON:

JOHN W. PARKER, WEST STRAND.

MDCCCLI.

God
220'12
Lec | Lec
97184

LONDON:
SAVILL AND EDWARDS, PRINTERS,
CHANDOS STREET.

TO

THE PARISHIONERS OF HALESWORTH,

THESE LECTURES,

THE CHIEF PART OF WHICH WERE ORIGINALLY

COMPOSED FOR THEIR USE,

ARE INSCRIBED,

WITH FERVENT PRAYERS FOR THEIR PRESENT AND

ETERNAL WELFARE,

BY THEIR SINCERE FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THE reasons which have led to the publication of these Lectures, and to their publication in this form, are the same which operated in reference to a former Work, the *Scripture-Revelations of a Future State;* with the addition, that the favourable reception of that Work by the Public (far beyond what had been anticipated) has, of course, supplied a further encouragement.

What has been said therefore in the Preface to that little volume, and which is equally applicable in reference to the present, there is no need here to repeat.

Of the present Series of Lectures, a great part of the matter of the first three was suggested by the same friend (now elevated

to a high and deserved station in the Church) who furnished the chief part of the substance of the Seventh Lecture in the former Series.

In this volume, as in the other, care has been taken (as was observed in the Preface to that) neither to give offence *unnecessarily* to any, nor, through fear of giving offence, to keep back what, on careful consideration, have been judged to be important truths: since we ought, on the one hand, to take care that our "good be not evil spoken of," and on the other hand, to be aware that no doctrine—whether true or false—is likely to be, at first sight, acceptable to those who may be, either in theory or in practice, opposed to it.

How different, and indeed opposite are the judgments, likely to be formed on the same points, by different persons, was exemplified in a striking manner on the first publication of the former volume. Two worthy and intelligent clergymen, friends of the

author, wrote to him to express their strong disapprobation of one particular Lecture; which they entreated him either to suppress or materially alter. Just at the same time, another highly respectable clergyman, personally a stranger to the author, wrote to him to ask permission to publish, separately, in a cheap form, for distribution, *that very Lecture;* which he considered as particularly valuable!

Just such a contrariety of judgment, doubtless, often takes place with respect to many a book, without so distinctly coming to the author's knowledge. But no Writer who has had this diversity of opinions so strongly brought before him, ought either to calculate on universal approbation, or again, to be disheartened by meeting with occasional censure.

CONTENTS.

LECTURE I.

PAGE

Angels 1

LECTURE II.

Reasons for revealing to Man the Ministrations of holy Angels 20

LECTURE III.

Cessation of sensible Angelic Visits 35

LECTURE IV.

Evil Angels 58

Note A. 84

LECTURE V.

Reasons for revealing to Man the existence of Evil-spirits 85

LECTURE VI.

PAGE
Demoniacs 113
Note B. 137
Note C. 141

LECTURE VII.

Temptations of our Saviour and his followers 145

LECTURE VIII.

Prevailing errors relative to Satanic Agency 173
Note D. 195

SCRIPTURE REVELATIONS

RESPECTING

GOOD AND EVIL ANGELS.

LECTURE I.

Angels.

ANY one who has been accustomed to study the Scriptures with attention and with interest, will be likely to have been struck with the circumstance that the notices there occurring, of ANGELS, are few, and very brief and scanty. And it is probable that you may have sometimes felt a degree of disappointment at this, and a wish to know more, on so curious and interesting a subject; and perhaps even something of wonder also that more has not been revealed to us upon it.

We learn that there are in the Creation, Beings — perhaps very numerous — both good and evil, apparently much superior to

Man in knowledge and power, and having some connexion with human transactions. The curiosity is natural and excusable, to know some particulars respecting their nature—the various Orders of them—their employments—and the whole condition of their life. But on these, and other such particulars, the Sacred Writers afford us, as I have said, either very scanty information or none at all.

Now it may not perhaps have occurred to you that this very circumstance is a strong confirmation of the divine origin of our Scriptures. Supposing we could perceive no reason at all why God should have withheld from us a fuller revelation of things so interesting to our curiosity, this, at least, we can plainly perceive, that if our Scriptures had been the work of mere men—if they had been either the dream of fanatical enthusiasts, or the "cunningly devised fables" of impostors—we may be sure they would have contained abundance of pretended revelations concerning the nature, and the number, and the different Orders, and the occupations, of Angels.

A crafty *impostor*, seeking, by all means whatever, to gain converts, and to fill men with a reverential awe of himself, would certainly not have failed to enlarge on subjects so alluring to human curiosity. And an *enthusiast*, mistaking his day-dreams for Inspiration, would not have failed to dream largely about matters so exciting to a heated imagination. Any one, then, who is well acquainted with human nature, will not doubt, that if our Scriptures had been a mere human composition, they would have abounded with pretended revelations giving ample accounts of good and evil Angels. And experience fully confirms this. For there actually exist pretended revelations, and books composed from traditions or from conjectures, in which are to be found very full accounts of these and of several other things which are but very slightly touched on in the real Holy Scriptures. We see, therefore, in this a plain proof that our Scriptures are *not* of Man's devising; since they differ in so important a point from anything that has come, or that would be likely to come from men. And this proof is—as I have

said—complete, even though we should never be able to conjecture the *reasons* for our sacred books giving such scanty information as they do. For if we do but perceive them to be such as we are convinced could not have come from Man, we cannot doubt that they are from Heaven.

Although, however, it is not for us to complain of God's having imparted to us just such knowledge as He has seen fit, and no more,—or to attempt to add on to his revelations, legendary fables, or human speculations and conjectures, we are allowed and bound, indeed, to collect as much information on these matters as the Scriptures do supply, and to endeavour to understand rightly what God does teach.

One point in particular, relative to the present subject, it is important we should clearly understand, and constantly keep in mind, because inattention to it is likely to lead to much perplexity and to mischievous error. It is this: that whenever we read—as we very often do—in the Old-Testament history, of an Angel (*i.e.*, Messenger) of the Lord, appearing to any one, such an Angel seems to have very seldom been (as

in the New-Testament history) a "Ministering Spirit"—a *person* created by the Lord and employed in his service.

You can easily understand that either any *person* or any *thing* may be employed by the Lord to intimate his will—to convey his messages to men,—or to perform any other service to them. And whoever—or *whatever* is so employed, becomes God's Angel or Messenger. Whether it be a supernatural flame,—or any other appearance,—or a voice from Heaven—or a man —or any other personal Agent of a different nature from Man—in all cases, that person or thing by which the Lord holds communication with mankind, is called his Angel or Messenger.

And since the word "Angel" originally signifies simply a messenger, hence, our Sacred Writers often found it necessary, in order to prevent mistakes, to use the expression "Angel *of the Lord*" to distinguish such a Messenger as they are speaking of from any ordinary messenger.*

* It appears also that the earliest Bishops appointed by the Apostles to take charge of the several churches were often called "Angels," as being delegates or Am-

Now in the Old-Testament History, when an Angel is mentioned as appearing, it is generally some visible object in which there was an immediate manifestation of *the Lord himself*: so that you will frequently find the expressions "the Lord" and the "Angel of the Lord" used indiscriminately to denote the same thing. Thus, where we read of God's first manifestation of Himself to Moses in the wilderness, in a flame of fire in a bush,* we are told that *the Lord* spake to

bassadors from those Apostles. The Angels of the Churches, mentioned in the beginning of the Book of REVELATIONS, are believed by most Divines to have been no other than the superintendents (or Bishops) of those churches.

* One of the commonest shrubs in that wilderness is the *dwarf palm:* not the date palm, but a different species, which does not, like that, rise to be a tree, but forms a low spreading bush. And it is generally supposed that it was in one of these that Moses saw the flame. It is remarkable that in the Eastern countries (and more lately in Spain and Italy also) palm branches have long been used on occasions of *triumph or rejoicing*, being reckoned an emblem of victory. Whether this custom arose from some tradition of that appearance to Moses, or whether it existed before, and was a reason for the selecting of a palm-bush for the display of the flame, we cannot determine.

It is still more remarkable that the Greek name for a palm, PHŒNIX, was also a name given to an imaginary kind of bird, which was fabled to live a thousand

Moses out of the flame, saying, "*I am the God* of Abraham, &c." And Moses "fell on his face, and worshipped." Now, if you look to the speech of Stephen as recorded in the Book of Acts (ch. vii. 30), you will find him speaking of the *Angel* of the Lord appearing to Moses in a flame of fire. And he again mentions (v. 38), the "*Angel* which spake unto Moses in Mount Sinai." Now we all know that what was spoken there, began with, "*I am the Lord thy God* who brought thee out of the Land of Egypt." It was the Lord Himself who held communications with his servants, through the means of the appearance of a flame, accompanied with "thunderings and voices," &c. And the *flame* is thence called his Messenger, or Angel. *No created person* was here employed. And hence it is that we often find (as I observed just above), the two expressions, "the Lord," and "the Angel of the Lord," used indiscriminately and with the same signification.

For instance, in the Book of Exodus

years, and then to take *fire*, and burn to ashes, from which a new Phœnix arose. This fable may have arisen from an obscure tradition of the *palm*-bush, which "burned with fire" and yet was not destroyed.

(chap. xxiii. v. 20), "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, (viz. the fiery and cloudy pillar which accompanied the Israelites in their journeyings), and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice: provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions; for my NAME is in him: (that is, it is a manifestation of my especial presence and agency; which in Scripture is often called "Name"), but if thou shalt indeed obey *his* voice, and do all that *I speak*" (here you observe that "he" and "I" are used indiscriminately), then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies," &c.

What has been said of the use of the word Angel in these passages, will for the most part apply, as to the essential points, to many others in the Old-Testament history; even in those places in which the human form is assumed.

For instance, in the appearance of Angels to Abraham and to Lot (Gen. xviii.), of an Angel to Balaam (Numb. xxii.), and to Manoah and his wife (Judges xiii); and in several others, you will find, on an attentive perusal, that the Angels there mentioned

(at least in the last two places), were not *created persons*, but manifestations of the Lord Himself. And accordingly, in most of these passages, you read of *divine worship* being offered and *accepted*. To the Angels on the contrary, mentioned in the New Testament—the ministering spirits recorded as appearing—divine worship either is not offered, or is carefully rejected. "See thou do it not!" (says the Angel to John in the Book of Revelation, ch. xxii.), "for I am thy fellow-servant."*

The *existence* indeed of created persons called Angels, seems to have been believed, in early times, by the greater part of the Jews; though the sect of the Sadducees denied it. And we find mention of such Beings in several parts of the Old Testament. But in the far greater number of the places (in the historical Books) in which the appearance of an Angel is recorded, it will be found to have been a manifestation of the Lord Himself.

Such then being the different characters,

* It is important to observe, that by the Lord Jesus, on the contrary, such worship was *accepted*. See John, ix. 35—38, and Mat. xxviii. 9 and 17, &c.

generally, of the Angels noticed in the Old and in the New-Testament histories, respectively, you cannot but perceive the importance of constantly keeping in mind the distinctions I have been pointing out; lest you should impute *false worship* to those persons who in the Old Testament are mentioned as offering adoration to what is called "the Angel of the Lord."

I have already remarked to you that the few, and brief, and scanty notices of Angels, in Scripture, are, from that very scantiness, a mark of the truth of the Sacred Books, being quite unlike what we should have naturally expected to find in Works devised by mere men; and that this proof would be complete even if we could not perceive, or at all conjecture, *why* God did not think fit to supply us with fuller revelations on the subject. But thus much at least we plainly do perceive: that this is conformable to the *general character* of all the revelations made to us. It appears to have been the design of the Most High to teach us what practically concerns ourselves, and nothing for the gratification of mere speculative curiosity. He has revealed to us

Himself in reference to what He has done and designs to do, for us; and He has taught us what He requires us to do on our part. But he has left us ignorant of much that relates to Himself, and to heaven and to heavenly things. And so also, concerning Angels, we find in Scripture but slight and scanty accounts as far as regards themselves, and their connexion with their Maker: what we principally learn is what concerns their connexion with *man*, and the services they perform for the human-Race: and even of this we are told but little. Besides a very slight and obscure hint in one of our Lord's discourses, which is supposed by some to have reference to certain guardian-angels,* we are told by Him expressly that the holy Angels have some sympathy with Man, and that "there is joy among them over a repentant sinner."†

It would, indeed, be rash to conclude from this, that *every* thing that passes on earth is known to all the holy Angels. But *some* knowledge, among some of them, of some human events, and also a lively interest in

* Mat. xviii. 10. † Luke xv. 10.

some of those events, we are plainly taught there must be. And the apostle Peter accordingly speaks of Angels "desiring to look into" (to "stoop down to see," as it is in the original) the mysteries of God's dealing in the salvation of Man.* Moreover, our Lord speaks of their being commissioned, at the end of the world, to separate God's faithful servants from the impenitent sinners;† "the reapers are the angels." * * * * * "The Son of man shall send forth his Angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity."

And in some services to Man, we find them in the New-Testament history recorded as occasionally employed; as, for instance, when an Angel was sent to Zacharias, and afterwards to the Virgin Mary, and again, to Cornelius, with messages from Heaven.‡

And here it may be worth while to remark, that in all the cases recorded, you will find that a sufficient *test* was provided to secure the persons concerned against

* 1 Pet. i. 12. † Matt. xxxix. 42.
‡ Luke i. and Acts x.

being misled by any delusions of imagination, and to assure them sufficiently of its being a real communication from Heaven that they had received.

In the case of the Centurion, Cornelius, for instance, all that he was required to *do*, by the Angel that appeared to him, was, to send to Joppa and inquire for one Simon Peter, who would give him further instructions. Now, supposing this appearance of the Angel had been merely a delusive dream, the only result would have been nothing more than that his messengers would have had a fruitless journey to Joppa. Cornelius was not required on the strength of the angelic communication, to adopt a new religion, or to take any other important step. But when the messengers who were sent found Peter in the very house pointed out, and found him prepared by a corresponding vision to accompany them, this was a decisive proof to both parties that there was no delusion in the case. As Dr. Paley has justly remarked, either Cornelius's vision, or Peter's—taking each separately—might, conceivably, have been a delusion: taking the two conjointly and connected, as they

were, with each other, there could be no doubt of the reality of either.

In the case of Zacharias, there appears to have actually been, in his mind, a degree of distrust, of some kind or other, (we cannot tell what,) concerning the vision presented to him. He may, perhaps, have felt a doubt whether what he seemed to see and hear was real, or whether he was deluded (as men have certainly sometimes been when in a morbid state) by a kind of day-dream. Or again, he may have felt a doubt whether the Being who appeared before him were really a holy Angel sent from God, or some other kind of superhuman Being, who was deceiving him. This at least seems sufficiently plain; that the doubts which Zacharias appears to have felt must have been something of the kind just alluded to; either doubts as to the reality of what appeared before him, or, as to its good or evil character. For we cannot suppose that, being fully convinced of having really received, through a divine Messenger, an announcement actually from God, he yet doubted the truth of that announcement. A doubt as to the character of the Being who appeared

to him, seems to be what the Angel alludes to in his reply; in which he begins by declaring *who* he is, and by whom sent; and immediately adds a miraculous proof of the truth of what he says: "I am Gabriel that stand in the presence of God, and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings: and behold thou shalt be dumb," &c.

If any, or both, of the doubts I have been speaking of (which were not, in themselves, blameable or unreasonable,) were in the mind of Zacharias, the obvious and sure *test* of the reality of the vision, and of its true character, was, evidently, to wait the *event.* He was not called on to *proclaim* at once what he had seen, but only to observe whether the prophecy came to pass, or not. If it failed, he would know that he had been deceived; but he would have lost nothing by the deception. If it were fulfilled, this event would have been a sufficient confirmation. Zacharias, however, was not content to await patiently the event, but demanded an *immediate* confirmation; saying, "Whereby shall I know this?" and a confirmation was accordingly granted him;

but granted him in such a manner as to convey to him at the same time a rebuke for that his impatience. The sign which confirmed, *immediately*, the reality of the vision was, his being struck dumb till the time when the other confirmation—the fulfilment of the prediction—should take place. "Behold thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, till the day when these things *shall be performed;* because thou believest not my words, which shall be *fulfilled* in their season;" as much as to say, the fulfilment of my words in due time, would have afforded, then, sufficient proof that there is no delusion: but since thou art not content to wait for that time, but requirest an immediate proof, thou shalt have it, in the shape of an infliction of dumbness, as at once a confirmatory sign, and a reproof for impatience.

The Virgin Mary, on the contrary, received no immediate sign; having been content humbly to wait for the fulfilment of the prediction made to her; which fulfilment afforded, to her, a decisive proof of the reality of the vision.

On several other occasions we read, in

the New Testament history, of Angels being employed in ministering to the Lord Jesus, and to others. Some of them were commissioned to announce his birth, and again, his resurrection. And an Angel released the Apostles when imprisoned by the Jewish Rulers; and afterwards Peter, when imprisoned by Herod.

In all these cases you will observe that, as has been said above, a sufficient test was provided to prove that there was no delusion. The finding of a babe lying in the manger at the Inn, as the Shepherds had been told by the Angel, saying, "this shall be *the* sign* unto you," proved clearly that they had not been dreaming, or deluded by any fancy. Again, the absence of the body of Jesus from the sepulchre, and afterwards his own appearance to the disciples, attested the truth of the announcement of his resurrection. And again, the actual release of the Apostles from prison, was of course a proof perfectly decisive.

In all these cases, the employment of Angels not only *took place*, but also was *made known to men*. There may have

* το σημειον.

been, we should remember, for aught we know, other cases in which the ministration of angels was employed, but has been concealed from us.

If any one should inquire—and such an inquiry does not seem presumptuous or unreasonable—why, in certain instances, the ministry of Angels to Man was made known to us, thus much at least we may clearly perceive; that it was *not* in order that men should invoke them when unseen, and pray to them for aid. For we find none of the Apostles or other disciples ever doing this. And it is important to remark that in all the instances in which Angels are recorded as holding intercourse with Man, it appears to have been always under a *special commission* from God Himself, and not as acting of themselves. And this looks as if no intercourse was allowed unless *specially authorised.*

As for anything approaching to adoration of an Angel, the Apostle John, in the passage cited just now from the Book of the Revelation, is earnestly warned against it: "see thou do it not! I am thy fellow-servant: worship God."

Of course there could be no objection to any one's addressing either an angel or a man, who should be *standing before him*, and even asking them to pray for him, as Simon the sorçerer asked of Peter.* But to invoke either Angels or pious men deceased, when *unseen*, and ask these to pray for us, would be evidently to assign to them an attribute of the ever-present God, and, in fact, to exalt *them* into gods, so as to rob of his just due the Lord, "whose name is jealous."

We may be certain, therefore, that whatever may be the reasons for God's having revealed to us the existence, and the employment by Him, of the holy Angels, our "fellow-servants," it was not that we should be induced or encouraged to adore or invoke them.

But some of the reasons why He does think fit to reveal to us something concerning them, may, I think, be reasonably conjectured. And on this point I shall lay before you some observations in the next lecture.

* Acts viii. 24.

LECTURE II.

Reasons for revealing to Man the Ministrations of holy Angels.

I POINTED out in the preceding Lecture, that something—though not much—has been revealed to us in Scripture, of God's employment of the holy Angels in ministering to Man: and that whatever may have been his design in revealing to us what He does reveal, on that subject, of this at least we may be certain, that it was not that we should pray to them, or in any way invoke their help; since Scripture not only does not warrant, but expressly forbids this.

We may be allowed, however, to inquire, with due reverence, what may have been the purpose of the Most High, in informing us, as He has done, in some instances, of his employment of our "fellow-servants" the holy Angels. It may have been, partly, to indicate to us that it belongs to the

general system of his Providence to make use of the services of his creatures for the accomplishment of purposes which (we cannot doubt) He might have effected by his own direct and immediate agency.

Men, we know, are continually thus employed. As relates to the things of *this world*, we know that it is the appointment of Providence that men should be dependent on their fellow-men for various good offices, and, in many instances, for life itself. To minister to the distressed and afflicted, and to perform various other acts of kindness to our brethren, is among the duties most earnestly inculcated by our Lord and his Apostles: not, certainly, that He has any *need* of our services and could not effectually relieve the sufferers, and minister to the wants of all men, without our assistance, but because He sees fit to honour us by being thus employed in fulfilling his will, and deems it best for all the parties concerned that mutual benevolence should thus be actively exercised.

And, in what relates to the spiritual wants of Man also, Divine Providence has adhered to the same rule. The Gospel

was preached to men by their fellow-men commissioned so to do. Instead of bestowing a direct revelation on each separate person who was to be called to the knowledge of the Gospel, the Lord Jesus sent forth *his disciples* to "teach all nations, baptizing them into the Christian faith," only supplying these his Messengers with such powers as were indispensably necessary for their success. They were furnished with the armour of God; but it was they that were to "fight the good fight." And so it is, still, down to the present day. The Instruction of the ignorant in the things pertaining to their eternal salvation, is left to be effected not by a direct Revelation to *them*, but by the care and diligence of their fellow-men.

That the same rule extends beyond *our* race—that creatures higher than Man are also employed by their Maker in carrying out his designs—in ministering to their fellow-servants—this He has thought fit to make known to us, partly perhaps for our encouragement in the duties called for from us in this world, and partly as giving some intimation of the future life prepared for us.

For we are certainly given to understand that there is to be some kind of resemblance at least between the condition of the blest hereafter and that of the holy Angels.

"Like the Angels" * is the expression of our Lord Himself when speaking (Luke xx. 35) of those who shall be accounted worthy "to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead." And we find mention made also, of "Angels and just men made perfect," as if, in the next world, they were to associate together.

And on the other hand, we read of the wicked being condemned, at the Day of Judgment, to the "everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels." Now it seems but fitting that we should have at least some little knowledge of the condition and occupations of Beings whom we are hereafter to *resemble* and also to *associate* with.†

But this perhaps is not all. There is some reason to think that both the good and the evil Angels may once have been in a state of *trial*, answering to ours here on earth. For we read in Scripture (Jude 6)

* ισαγγελοι.

† See Lectures VIII. and X. on a Future State.

of "Angels who kept not their first estate" (their original condition), "but left their own habitation, and are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great Day," *i.e.*, are limited in their powers (like malefactors who labour in chains) and afflicted with the gloom of divine displeasure.

It is not unlikely, therefore, that the holy Angels also may have formerly been subjected to trial, through which they had passed triumphantly;—that both they, and those who fell, may have originally been somewhat such Beings as we are now; and that men, according as they pass through this their present state of trial, will be hereafter such Beings respectively, as the good and the evil Angels are now.

This, however, we are not authorised positively to assert, as the Scriptures do not expressly teach it: they only lead us to believe that it *may* be so, and to conjecture that it is a thing not improbable. But at any rate, the appearances of Angels served to prepare men's minds, in some degree, for the doctrine of a *resurrection*, and to aid their conception of a new

and exalted state of existence in another world.

There were exhibited to the senses of men (in a few instances) created Beings in many respects like men, in others more refined and elevated; having a human form and speech, and something of human affections, but without the grosser attributes of mortals. This served to form and to keep up the idea, not only that Man is not the highest of God's creatures, but moreover that there is a state of existence exalted indeed and glorified beyond that in which we now are, yet not so utterly remote from our present condition, but that we may conceive something resembling it to be reserved for us hereafter, and may be led to aspirations after something higher and better than Man's life on Earth, and which yet shall not be inconsistent with our consciousness of personal identity—with our being—and feeling ourselves to be—the *same* individuals.

The Angels, in short, in their visits to this world of ours, gave Man a glimpse of a higher and better world. They were *specimens*, so to speak, of what is to be

found in the heavenly Canaan, our Land of Promise, answering to those fruits which the spies, sent by Moses into Canaan, brought to the Israelites in the dreary and barren wilderness, in order to convince them of the goodness of that pleasant land, and to encourage them to enter into it.

And it is worth remarking, as confirmatory of what has been just said concerning the connexion between the appearances of Angels and the doctrine of a *Resurrection*, that the Sadducees who denied the one, denied the other also.* "For the Sadducees say there is no *resurrection*, neither *angel*, nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess both." The rejection, therefore (as well as the admission), of both the one and the other doctrine, seem to have been somehow connected.

But whatever may be the likeness or the unlikeness, in some respects, between the present condition of the holy Angels, and that of the blest after the resurrection, thus much at least I think we may fairly infer, from what we read in Scripture of God's employ-

* Acts, xxiii. 8.

ment of Angels in carrying on his designs; that the condition of the blest in a better world is not likely to be (as some seem to take for granted) a state of mere repose, —of total inactivity, in which they will be occupied in mere contemplation, without having, properly speaking, anything *to do;* as if "peace" and "rest" necessarily implied utter indolence. On the contrary, there seems every reason to believe that, though exempted from painful toils and distressing anxieties, as well as from every other kind of *suffering*—and though, in that sense, they will "rest from their labours," yet they will still be employed in doing good offices to the children of their Heavenly Father.

Such, certainly, is the kind of occupation by which Christians are directed to *prepare* themselves for that better world. And it would be strange indeed if all the habits of active benevolence which the Christian has been assiduously forming throughout his whole life, while looking for, and preparing for, a state of future bliss, were to be at once laid aside, and, indeed, totally changed and reversed, as soon as he enters on that state; and he were immediately to become a totally

different kind of Being from what he has been labouring to become here below, and were to exchange his character of beneficent exertion for that of indolent and contented apathy. As well might one suppose that a tree which we had been carefully cultivating while a sapling, and assiduously rearing to maturity, was destined, immediately on *attaining* maturity, to become another tree of a totally different kind—a plant of some distinct species.*

We might fairly infer then, I think, merely from what we are taught of the true Christian's life on earth, that the Christian-life in Heaven is not to be a state of mere inactive repose. But this conclusion is very much strengthened by our finding that those, our already-blest fellow-servants, are actively employed by their and our heavenly Master, in doing service to mankind.

In this, and in the preceding Lecture, I have endeavoured to set forth what is to be found in our *Sacred Books*, which God's Providence has left us for our instruc-

* See Lectures IX. and X. on a Future State.

tion. The most brilliant display of eloquence, however gratifying to the hearers and readers, I should, I trust, regard as of little worth (even if I possessed more of it than any man ever did possess), in comparison with the great object of leading you to an intelligent and profitable study of those Books. It has been my aim, therefore, instead of entertaining you with any conjectures of ingenious men concerning things which God has not thought fit to make known to us in Scripture—instead of this, I have endeavoured to lay before you, as clearly as possible, what it is that He does there teach us:—to aid your study; in short, of the *Scripture-revelations* concerning those superhuman Beings, good and evil, of whose agency the Sacred Writers make mention.

The scantiness of the information they do afford us on those points, is, as I have remarked above—however unsatisfactory to our curiosity—a strong confirmation of the truth of our Scriptures; which are, in this respect, quite the reverse of what we should have been sure to find in the works either of impostors or of enthusiasts.

I then took occasion to point out to you that this scantiness of information on such a subject, is of a piece with God's dealings with us throughout;—with the general character of his Revelation. Of such things as are not discoverable by unaided Reason, He has made known to us what is practically needful for our direction and encouragement, but nothing for the gratification of mere speculative curiosity.

Next, I pointed out to you the importance of keeping in mind the distinction between the Angels whose appearances are recorded in the Old and in the New Testament: those in the Old, being, for the most part, sensible manifestations of Jehovah Himself through the medium of some appearance,—whether of a flame, or of a human figure, or some other visible emblem, serving as his messenger (or angel); while the Angels mentioned in the New Testament seem always to have been *personal* agents.

And the appearances of these latter which we do find recorded, are recorded—I ventured to suggest—for the purpose, among others, of showing us that though the Most High can have no need of the service of

any of his creatures, yet He does see fit to employ in the accomplishment of his purposes, not only men, but Beings superior to Man. As we are taught to pray that God's will may be "done on Earth *as it is in Heaven*," so we have—as a kind of comment on that petition—something of a sample afforded us of the fulfilment of His will in Heaven, when we see instances recorded of the employment of the holy Angels in active good offices. We have, I may say—in addition to the precepts given us—the *example* of those Angels set before us for our instruction and encouragement.

And, lastly, I pointed out that we are also led to conclude that if we duly profit by their example, we shall hereafter be associated with those glorious Beings in the mansions of eternal bliss, where our Divine Master is gone before "to prepare a place for us."

Now what would be your thoughts and feelings if it were announced to you—to any one of you, even in the humblest condition of life—that you had succeeded to the inheritance of a high title and exalted rank and station, and to boundless riches,

and that you would shortly be invited to the court of some great sovereign, and would spend your life thenceforth among princes, and others of the highest orders, and of the most refined and dignified manners? You would certainly not be without some thought of *preparing* yourself for so great an elevation, by cultivating as much as possible all such habits as might make you not an unsuitable companion for the members of that exalted society into which you were hoping to be enrolled. You would not, certainly, occupy the intermediate time in courting the society of the basest and most degraded of the rabble, in imitating *their* manners, and adopting their habits. You would endeavour, on the contrary, to live as much as possible *like* a person who expected shortly to be introduced into what is called the best society.

Now how paltry and contemptible is the splendour of an earthly court—how trifling is an inheritance of earthly wealth and greatness, which can, at the utmost, last but a few short years—how contemptible is the elevation of nobles and princes (as far as regards *merely* their earthly station and

titles)—how little worthy of regard, I say, are all these things, in comparison with the mansions of heavenly bliss—with the inheritance of a glorious immortality—with the society of "Angels and just men made perfect!"

Do you *believe* that all this is placed before you?—before all, even of the humblest in worldly station? Do you *expect* to be received at the Court of Heaven,—to be introduced into the society of God's holy Angels? If so, are you *preparing* for such a reception?—for such companions? Are you striving, through the promised aid of God's sanctifying Spirit, to become qualified for "dwelling for ever with the LORD?" "We know not," says the apostle John, "what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him: for we shall see Him as He is; and every one that hath this hope on* Him, purifieth himself even as He is pure."†

* επι.

† As much as to say, "even the very *hope* of hereafter being with the Lord, leads believers to conform themselves to the example of his purity: and the *actual enjoyment* of his presence will carry further and complete that resemblance to their divine Master which they are now striving after.

Are you giving this proof of such a hope? or are you suffering yourself to be bound down to this world by its pleasures and its cares? or are you suffering the baser portion of your nature—the mere animal—to prevail over the higher, the angelic character—and to enslave you to sensual indulgences? Or are you giving way to and cherishing anger, envy, detraction, malice, falsehood, and all those other evil propensities which are the characteristics not of the *holy* Angels—the Spirits of Heaven—but of the unclean Spirits who are their adversaries and ours?

Ask yourself these questions, and ask them habitually, and ask them practically, *now*, during your time of trial and preparation here below; because, "at the hour of death, and in the Day of Judgment, it will be too late to make such inquiries. May God grant us grace and strength to prepare ourselves as we ought for those heavenly mansions, whither our Saviour is gone to prepare a place for his faithful servants!

LECTURE III.

Cessation of sensible Angelic Visits.

SOME persons may perhaps be disposed to inquire why it is that God does not now, as in earlier times, send Angels to minister to mankind. It cannot be that He has forsaken his People, or regards them less than formerly. Is it then that He finds no one now that is worthy of such favour and care as certain holy men formerly enjoyed; and that any one who should but attain to pre-eminent piety and faith, may expect, in these days angelic visits, and other miraculous signs and revelations?

And some again there are who give ear to marvellous narratives not supported by any sufficient evidence, of appearances of Angels, in later times, to persons of supposed superior holiness, beyond what is required of Christians in general, and who

are thence designated as "Saints." * Others on the contrary dislike the thought of any Beings in the creation superior to Man; and if they do not distinctly maintain (like the Sadducees of old), that there are none such, yet are loth to contemplate the human Race as other than the highest of God's creatures; and thence are led to try to explain away everything that is said in Scripture concerning the appearances of Angels.

It was a kind of feeling similar to this, that made our ancestors take for granted that the Earth we inhabit must be the *centre of the universe;* a notion which many persons clung to even after the most decisive proofs to the contrary had been given. They seemed to feel it a kind of degradation that *our* Earth should be merely one out of several planets moving round the sun.

And some, again, may be found, who are unwilling to believe that anything can ever

* The Apostles admitted no distinction of this kind, but called all Christians "Saints," as being dedicated to the Lord. See *Lessons on Religious Worship.* L. IV. § 7—11.

have happened, anywhere, or at any time, different from what they themselves have been accustomed to; and accordingly, declare, that so and so is "contrary to the Laws of Nature," and consequently can never have happened at all: as if *their* knowledge extended to *all* the Laws of Nature, and their own experience were to mark the limit of all possibility. Such was the disposition of that king of Bantam, (a very hot country in the East Indies,) who derided the European ambassadors when they told him of water becoming solid. He and all his people had never experienced any such thing; and therefore he supposed himself to know by experience that it was contrary to the Laws of Nature: —as indeed it was, to all the Laws of Nature that *he* was acquainted with:—and hence he rejected the account as an impossibility.

But any one who believes that this Earth, and all the species of plants and animals now existing on it, did not exist from all eternity, but were once created, must admit that something different from the *present* ordinary course of nature did, once at least, take place. For we have no experience of

creations of new species taking place around us now. And, moreover, geologists find in ancient strata of rock, fossil-remains, which plainly prove that the Earth was formerly stocked with vast numbers of plants and animals totally different from those which are found on it at present, and which, it appears, did not then exist.

And it may be added that our first parents, or at least some portion of mankind, must, at some time or other, have learnt some of the arts of life, and received the first rudiments of civilization, from some superhuman Being holding communication with them, such as does not take place now. For else, since it does not appear that any savages ever did, or can, civilize themselves, without external aid, all mankind would have been savages to this day.*

I throw out these considerations, only for the purpose of showing, that let a man go as far as he will in explaining away, or in rejecting, the narratives of Scripture, he cannot escape being compelled to believe that all things have not always been in the

* See *Lessons on Religious Worship*, L. II.

same state as now. But it is not my design to enter, in these Lectures, into an examination of the evidences of the truth of our sacred books.* I am addressing myself to those who are believers in them, and who are willing to understand them in the sense which the writers themselves must have intended to convey.

But without presuming to decide that nothing could have existed or occurred two or three thousand years ago, different from what we see around us, it may be permitted reverently to inquire into the probable reasons for the change (in reference to the point now more immediately before us), which appears to have taken place in the scheme of divine government.

The visible appearances of Angels in bodily shape, speaking to men, and touching, and literally leading them, would seem to have been a mode of divine government suited, partly (1) to an early and comparatively rude state of society, in which it was requisite that men's bodily senses should be immediately acted on; and partly, again

* See *Lessons on Christian Evidences.* See also *Note* D, at the end of this Volume.

(2), to the first introduction of a new religion; as a portion of those miraculous manifestations of divine agency which a new revelation requires.

For (1) a gross-minded, and unreflecting, and half-barbarian people must be addressed more through their senses, and less through their reason, than men further advanced in civilization. And, again (2), when men were called on—as at the first introduction of the Gospel—to throw off all their early prejudices, and abandon all the expectations they had been brought up in, and to expose themselves, moreover, to the bitterest hatred of most of their countrymen, and to the scorn and derision of the most civilized and enlightened of the Gentiles, and to fierce persecutions from both, it was necessary that they should be favoured with sensible and striking and numerous miraculous proofs, for their own conviction, and that of those they addressed, as evident signs that God was with them.

The miraculous occurrences recorded in the Bible are indeed extraordinary, and wonderful, and, in themselves, improbable; but all of them put together are as nothing

in point of strangeness compared with the only alternative,—with what must be believed by any one who should thereupon resolve to *reject* those miraculous narratives. That a handful of Jewish peasants and fishermen should undertake to abolish the religions of the whole civilized world, and introduce a new one, in defiance of all the prejudices, and all the power of this world arrayed against them;—that they should think to effect this by pretending to miraculous powers which they did not, and knew they did not, possess;—and that they should *succeed* in the attempt,—all this is surely many times more incredible than anything and everything recorded in our Scriptures. And no one should make a boast of his "*incredulity*" in disbelieving something that is very strange, while he is believing—as the only alternative—something incomparably *more* strange.

But many persons are apt to forget—though it is self-evident on a moment's reflection—that *dis*believing is believing; since to disbelieve any assertion is to believe its contradictory; and whoever does this on slight grounds, is both credulous

and incredulous; these being, in fact, one and the same habit of mind.

Thus, the Jews who rejected Jesus as a Magician (as the unbelieving Jews do, at this day), accounting for his miracles as performed through the aid of evil-spirits, and who are accordingly reproached with "want of faith," evidently showed the grossest credulity in adopting such an explanation. For, the only way to avoid credulity and incredulity,—the two necessarily going together,—is, to listen to, and yield to, the best evidence, and to believe and disbelieve, on good grounds.

We may perceive then clearly, at least thus much, that at the first introduction of a new religion, professing to be a divine revelation, it was indispensably necessary that there should be some miraculous manifestations of divine power; without which no one could have been fairly called on to receive it; and without which the Gospel never *could* have been received, unsupported as it was by temporal power.

Some, perhaps, may have expected that miraculous gifts would be continued to the Church; or that at least some occasional

signs and wonders—among others, angelic visits—would be from time to time renewed, for the correction of the erroneous, the reclaiming of sinners, and the conversion of Pagans. But without undertaking to explain why things have not been so ordered, we can at least understand that there is not the *same* need of such miraculous displays, now, that there was at the first introduction of Christianity. The first preachers could never have expected—or, if they had, would have expected in vain—to obtain a hearing as God's messengers, if they had not been able to appeal,—as they did,—to undeniable miraculous displays occurring at the time; and on the evidence of which the religion was established. But to us, on the other hand, of the present day, the very fact of its having *been* so established—the very existence of such a religion, so introduced—is a proof which we may appeal to of its divine origin.

It is for us then—instead of wondering, and grieving, and complaining that the divine dispensations are not something different from what we find them,—to accept thankfully whatever advantages actually do

lie within our reach, and to do our best to derive the greatest benefit from them.

And let not the members of Christ's Church as it now exists, suppose that they are less favoured than God's People were formerly, on account of their not having, like those, sensible communications from Heaven by thunderings, and supernatural flames, and voices, and visits of Angels. We, who have a religion less addressed to the senses, and more spiritual, than the earlier dispensations, have, no less than God's People of old, a promise of divine presence, and aid, and guidance. For aught we know, even the holy Angels may be now employed, though unseen, in ministering to mankind. But on this point, nothing is revealed to us. On another point, something has been revealed: the presence of Christ by his "Spirit which helpeth our infirmities." Our divine Master has promised to "come unto them that love Him and keep his saying;" and to "*manifest* Himself to them." He speaks to them, though not in a literally audible voice. He leads them, not less really than of old, though not literally, by the hand: for "as

many" (says the Apostle Paul) "as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God;" and "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

He speaks to us, in the Scriptures written by his inspired followers, and in all the useful instruction and good advice we receive from any one. He visits us in the thoughts that arise in our hearts,—in the events that befal us,—in the occurrences that take place around us. He comes indeed in vain to those who are not willing to seek, and to receive, and to be led by Him: but if we look earnestly, we shall see Him: if we listen attentively, we shall hear his voice.

Now let any one suppose the case of an angelic Vision presenting itself to his bodily senses this day. There is indeed no reason to expect that any such event will actually occur; but it is easy to *imagine* it. Nay it would be *conceivable* even to a Sadducee who denied the existence of Angels altogether. He could at least easily *imagine* such an occurrence, and picture to himself how he would feel and act if it did take place.

Imagine yourself, then, visited by a Superhuman Being, clad in celestial light, and announcing himself as a messenger from Heaven. And suppose him to remind you that the Saviour who died on the Cross for your redemption, is risen from the dead, and is gone to prepare a place for you in the Mansions of eternal bliss; but that you will forfeit this rich inheritance, and lose all that He has done for you, unless you give proof of your love to Him by keeping his commandments;—by striving to be led by his Spirit into an imitation of Him. The Angel also admonishes you perhaps respecting some known sin you are indulging in, or some known duty you are habitually neglecting. Perhaps he reminds you of negligent attendance on divine Worship, or of habitual absence from the holy Communion of the Lord's Supper, which He, your great Master and Redeemer, enjoined you to celebrate in memory of his dying for you. Or again, the heavenly messenger points out to you, suppose, how little you practise self-examination, or how much you are devoted to the cares and pleasures of this life, which is so soon to come to an

end, and how little in comparison your thoughts dwell on the life beyond the grave, and the account you will have to render at the Last Day, of all that you shall have done or left undone,—of all the advantages you shall have used, or wasted:—among the rest, of the very warnings the Angel is addressing to you.

Now imagine to yourself what would be your thoughts and feelings if such a resplendent Vision, and such a Message, were actually brought before your senses. You would surely be awe-struck;—you would be roused from carelessness;—you would be filled with earnest good resolutions to profit by the heavenly warning, by devoting yourself henceforth more than ever to the care of your eternal salvation.

And now, consider next, how the case actually stands with you. Everything that I have been supposing the Angel to have said to you, you already know, as it is. For I have not been supposing him to bring you any new revelation, but only to remind you of articles of your own belief, and of things you are yourself, now, conscious of.

Why not then act, at once, as if you *had* received this angelic message?

Oh, but such a striking and wonderful Vision, (you will perhaps say,) presented to the bodily senses, would impress the mind more forcibly.

Is it then because you *only believe* all these things, that you care little about them, and do not take pains to *act* on your belief? You would not proceed so with respect to your temporal concerns, and to worldly goods, which are such trifles in comparison with the salvation of your soul. If, for instance, you had received notice that a great estate had been bequeathed to you, surely you would not sit still and neglect to go and secure the possession of it, merely because you did not *see* the land before your eyes, or because the gold and silver were not actually counted out in your presence. You would have faith in the assurances of respectable men that the inheritance was legally yours, and that you had only to take proper steps to obtain possession of it; and you would act on your belief.

Now you have only to put equal faith in God's promises, and take equal pains and

care to secure "an inheritance that fadeth not away, eternal, in the Heavens." It is thus and thus only that you can attain that blessing of your Saviour which is, for us, the only one reserved. "Thomas," said He, "because thou hast *seen* me thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."*

In truth, you *are* receiving, now, a

* John, xx. 29.

The following beautiful stanzas on this text, I hope the author will pardon me for printing:—

"We saw Thee not, when Thou didst tread,
O Saviour, this our sinful earth;
Nor heard thy voice restore the dead,
And waken them to second birth:
Yet we believe that Thou *didst* come,
And quit for us thy glorious home.

"We were not with the faithful few
Who stood thy bitter cross around;
Nor heard thy prayer for those who slew;
Nor felt that earthquake rock the ground;
We saw no spear-wound pierce thy side:
But we believe that Thou *hast* died.

"No angel's message met our ear,
On that first glorious Easter-day;
"The Lord is risen, He is not here;
Come, see the place where Jesus lay:
But we believe that Thou *didst* quell
The banded powers of Death and Hell.

message from God. For, every *person*, and every *thing*, through which He brings before men his commands, or his warnings, or his promises, becomes, so far, his Angel or Messenger. I am not indeed commissioned to bring before you any new information, or to teach any new doctrine. But if all I have now brought before you be nothing more than what you were already well aware has been revealed to Man, long since, by the Most High, then, the very words which now meet your ears or eyes, should be regarded by you as a message from Him—as Christ's own instructions and commands. And "the word"—says He—"that I have spoken, the same shall judge a man at the last Day."

For this message, therefore, according as you shall act upon it or neglect it, you will have to render an account, along with the rest of your life, before Christ Himself at the great Day of Judgment.

"We saw Thee not return on high:
And now, our longing sight to bless,
No ray of glory from the sky
Shines down upon our Wilderness:
But we believe that Thou *art* there,
And seek Thee, Lord, in praise and prayer."

But how, it may be asked, are we to know the voice that we are to listen to? How must we distinguish—now that there are no miraculous signs to guide us—right thoughts, and sound instructors, and good advisers, from such as are worthless or wrong?

Our Lord Himself has given us, on this point, both a warning, and a rule for our guidance. He has warned us to "beware of false prophets which come to us in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves;" and has told us to "know them by their fruits." And all thoughts, and suggestions, and plans, and hopes, and reasonings, and judgments, whether coming from without or from within, — whether brought before us by others, or arising in our own minds, are to be tried by this rule. It is from God that "all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed;" and his Providence has supplied us with records of the lives and teaching of the Lord Jesus Himself, and of his Apostles. Our own conscience, enlightened and guided by these, will enable us to distinguish, if we examine with care and with candid

sincerity, and with attentive consultation of Scripture, what suggestions of our own thoughts, or of the persons around us, we ought to listen to, and what to avoid.

And this kind of judgment men were required, in most instances, to exercise, even in the days when angelic visits, and other miraculous Signs, were not unknown. The persons who lived in those times appear to have been furnished with means of judging —as I remarked in a former Lecture— whether it was a real divine message that, on each occasion, was sent, or whether they were deluded by some morbid fancy, or by some evil Being.

Paul warns his converts against giving heed to any other Gospel than what he had delivered to them, even though "preached by an Angel from Heaven:" not, of course, that he supposed any real messenger from Heaven ever *could* preach a different Gospel; but, that fanatical enthusiasts might *imagine*, or crafty impostors *pretend*, that they had received some such Heaven-sent message: and the Apostle warns them that whatever should be at variance with the Gospel which they had once received on

undoubted evidence of its being from God, must be at once rejected, on that ground.

So also, in more ancient times, we find the Israelites warned, in the Book of Deuteronomy (ch. xiii.), not to give heed to any prophet who should seek to seduce them into the worship of strange gods, even though he should appeal to some supposed supernatural Sign.

There is not, I conceive, any reason for thinking that any real miraculous powers were ever actually displayed by any false prophet seeking to delude the Israelites into idolatry. But we well know that, at various times, juggling tricks and impostures have been contrived, which have succeeded in deluding the simple and ignorant: and again, that they have sometimes been imposed upon by artful men taking advantage of the occurrence of some natural phenomenon—such as an eclipse*—which superior knowledge may enable a man to foretell.

Now it would have been too much to expect of ignorant and half-civilized men,

* As Columbus imposed on the American Indians.

such as the greater part of the Israelites, that they should be not only willing but able so carefully to investigate every pretension to superhuman powers, as to detect with infallible certainty any attempted deception of this kind. They were forewarned, therefore, once for all, to reject at once every attempt to draw them aside from the worship of the true God, who had so clearly manifested Himself to them.

To us, the Christians of the present day, a more spiritual religion is given than to the Israelites of old; and we are required to walk more "by faith and less by sight," than they. But we have good grounds for our belief in the Holy Scriptures "which are able to make us wise unto salvation," and for confidence that "every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights."

It is for us, instead of indulging in any vain cravings after a more complete system of divine guidance than we have any reason for expecting,—it is for us (as I have said above) to make the most of the advantages we do possess, by listening to and following, as a voice from Heaven—as an

Angel of the LORD—every suggestion that would lead us to Him,—every warning that would keep us in his paths.

Ask yourself, each one who sincerely desires divine help and guidance, whether you may not, like some holy men of old, have "received Angels unawares;"—whether you may not have been visited—though not by a divine messenger in bodily shape—yet by some thought or feeling which, in some hour of trial, has led you—or *would* have led you—out of evil company, or some other such danger, even as the Angels led Lot out of the city doomed to destruction, and *would* have saved his sons-in-law, had they not refused the guidance. May not some temporal loss, or mortification, or alarm, have occurred opportunely to shake off from you the chain of over-devotedness to worldly objects, or to rouse you from indolent carelessness, like the Angel which visited Peter in the prison, bidding him arise and gird himself, and causing his fetters to fall off, and the prison gates to open? Or may not the ordinary course of events—that is, of God's Providence which makes "all things work together for good to them that love

Him"—have sometimes introduced you to some book, or some teacher, fitted to supply to you just the instruction, or the consolation you were most in need of; even as the Angel brought Cornelius to the knowledge of Peter, who should "tell him what he ought to do?"

In these, and similar cases, you may have been receiving angelic visits unawares; since every person or thing through which God communicates with us, is, so far, his Angel or Messenger.

Only, remember—as I have already said—not to receive as a divine admonition anything that is not conformable to the records of God's will as contained in Scripture, and to a conscience carefully regulated by Scripture. You must not at once conclude anything that is strongly impressed on your mind to be, therefore, a direction sent from God, and which must accordingly be good and right, as coming from Him. On the contrary, you must judge it to come from Him, only if you find it to be right and good; and for that reason. For even if you believed yourself actually to see with your bodily eyes a supernatural

vision, you could not be sure (as I have already said) whether it was of a good or an evil origin, except by its tendency,—by its being conformable, or the contrary,—to God's revealed will.

As "Satan himself transforms himself," we are told, "into an angel of light,"* so we are warned that his ministers also do the like; and we are cautioned against "false teachers coming in sheep's clothing, while inwardly they are ravening wolves:" and it is by their fruits we are directed to know them.

Such is the care and vigilance required of us,—such the difficulties and trials that beset our path,—here below. A higher and better state is prepared for us hereafter; when we shall be associated, if it be not our own fault, with those who have passed through,—as we shall then have done,—those earthly trials and difficulties; —with Angels, and just men made perfect: "and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

* 2 Cor. xi. 13—15.

LECTURE IV.

Evil Angels.

MENTION is made in Scripture (as I have before remarked), not only of holy Angels, but also of evil Angels, or, as they are often called, "unclean Spirits," or "Demons."* No detailed accounts indeed are given of either: but it is remarkable that there are, in the New Testament, much more frequent notices of *evil* than of *good* Angels.

The cause of this may probably have been that whatever good offices men may receive from these latter, are never to be *sought* from them. They are (as I formerly observed) never to be *called on*, and their aid invoked. And it is likely, therefore, that their existence and agency are

* This is the word in the original, which our translators have in several places (unfortunately) translated "devils;" not recollecting that Devil is the *proper name* of an *individual*, and accordingly is never employed by the Sacred Writers in the plural number, as applied to evil spirits.

the less frequently mentioned, for fear men should be led into the error of false worship. On the other hand, the dangers to which any one may be exposed from evil Spirits, it was right to give warning of, and frequently to remind men to be on their guard against them.

And such dangers, accordingly, are, as I have said, very frequently alluded to in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, on the contrary, and especially in the earlier Books of it, there are much less frequent allusions to such Beings.

One probable reason for this difference, I shall notice in a future Lecture. But in the meantime, it is worth while to observe, that there is no such entire omission of the subject in the Old Testament as a hasty reader might be led to suppose. For the gods worshipped by the ancient heathen, were believed, by the Jews, and indeed by the early Christians also, to be really-existing Evil-demons.* And, indeed, the very name "Demons" was applied by the hea-

* I have entered more fully on this subject in the next Lecture.

then themselves to the Beings they worshipped.

It is true, we often find the Jews deriding the heathen for what is strictly called "Idolatry"—for worshipping images of silver, and gold, and wood, and stone, "the work of men's hands; which have eyes, and see not, ears, and hear not," &c. But, like all other idolaters—they believed the images they venerated to be representations or emblems of some really-existing persons: and, what is more, the Jews—whether truly or erroneously—held the same belief. For we find them speaking, for instance, of "Beelzebub as the prince of the Demons;" and we know that Beelzebub was the Philistine God worshipped at Ekron.*

In the New Testament, then, we find, as has been just said, very frequent allusions to the existence and to the agency of Evil-Spirits, both in our Lord's own discourses, and in the Epistles. And considering in how many places, and how very distinctly and strongly our Lord and his Apostles speak on the subject, it will probably be

* 2 Kings, i. 2. See also 2 Chron. xi. 15; Levit. xvii. 7, and Psalm cvi. 37.

altogether startling to some of my readers to learn that there are persons professing belief in the Sacred Writings, who yet deny the existence of any evil-spirits; maintaining that it is a thing utterly incredible that God should permit any such Being to exist. And as for what Christ and his Apostles have said on the subject, their expressions, it is contended, are to be understood figuratively, and as an "accommodation" (that is the word these persons use) to the popular notions of the day. When they speak of any temptation, or any affliction, bodily or mental, as proceeding from Satan or his angels, this, we are told, is only a condescension to vulgar prejudices; and what is meant is merely a "personification" of moral evil,—a description of men's vicious propensities or natural diseases, in figurative language; the true import of which, however, was not understood at the time, or for about fifteen centuries after!

To some it may appear almost incredible that persons not deficient in intelligence, and believing (or at least professing to believe) in the divine origin of Christianity, should attribute to its Founder and first

Preachers such an "accommodation"—worthy of a harsher name—to popular religious error.

But excessive eagerness to get over some perplexing difficulty often leads rash men to overlook entirely the difficulties—perhaps much greater—which may lie on the opposite side. They imagine that there is something of philosophical acuteness in *in*credulity,—in *dis*believing and rejecting what appears, in itself strange and improbable; and they forget that (as I observed in the preceding Lecture) disbelieving is believing; and that consequently he who rejects something wonderful when the only alternative is to believe something still *more* wonderful, is at once weakly incredulous, and weakly credulous.

We should not admire the prudent caution of a mariner who should steer far away from some dangerous shoal, without inquiring or watching to see whether there might not be a quicksand on the opposite quarter. But such is the conduct of those who attempt to explain away some difficulty, without reflecting whether they may not be running into a greater difficulty. In the present

instance, however, the persons I am speaking of do not even go one step towards removing or lessening the difficulty in question. For, the permission of evil-spirits is only one branch of that great and insuperable difficulty, the permission of EVIL in the Universe. And if evil does exist, and we are (as in truth we are) totally unable to explain how, or why, it would be mere folly to maintain that such and such a particular form of it cannot possibly exist, on the ground that we are at a loss to explain it in that particular instance.

Now there is no greater difficulty—great though it undoubtedly is—in the permission of evil-spirits than of evil *men*. For instance, that so many should be sold as *slaves*, and often, to tyrannical masters, is as hard to explain, as that any one should have been exposed to any kind of affliction from Demons.

In particular, it may be a matter of especial wonder, why—besides all the other evils that certainly do exist—it should be permitted to bad men to seduce others,—as they are usually most anxious to do—to follow their evil examples. We need not

indeed feel any wonder that an evil Being—whether man or demon—should *endeavour* to degrade others into his own condition: but, that either should be permitted to labour at this so often with *success*, is a difficulty we cannot at all explain. The difficulty, however, is no greater in the one case than in the other.

And yet so blind are some persons to this most obvious truth, that there is a Tale extant, by an author of considerable repute, the object of which is to disprove the agency and the existence of evil demons, by a kind of argument whose futility is (of course, unintentionally) proved in the very Tale itself. The principal personage in the Tale is represented as being at length convinced by the above argument; namely, that God would never permit any evil Being to have power to molest mankind. And this argument is represented as being urged—and successfully urged—while a *pirate-ship* was actually in sight, the crew of which had just been ravaging the country, and committing all kinds of atrocities! The speaker and the hearer of the argument are represented as having this before their very eyes,

and yet without perceiving that it completely refuted what was urged!

Whatever, therefore, any one may decide as to the actual existence of evil-spirits, it must be evident, on reflection, to any one of common sense, that this particular objection to it must completely fall to the ground; since it is an objection which lies equally against what every one knows to be true.*

If there be some World—one of the Planets, suppose—far distant from our own, in which sin and suffering have always been wholly unknown, one can conceive the inhabitants of that happy World, reasoning, not very absurdly, from their own condition to that of others. If they were told, for instance, of countries in our World laid waste by destructive inundations, or overwhelmed with the torrents of liquid fire from Volcanos, one can conceive them disputing the possibility of this, as a thing

* I have seen a book in which the author reports of some acquaintance of his, that, on being asked by some one whether he did not believe in the Devil, he answered, "Oh no! I believe in God. Don't you?"

This seems to be about as wise as if on being asked, "Do you not believe in the existence of *sickness?*" he had replied, "Oh no! I believe in *health.* Don't you?"

God would never have permitted. But if people dwelling in Holland, for instance, were, on such grounds, to deny the fiery eruptions of Mount Vesuvius, and if the Italians, again, who dwell near that mountain, were, on like grounds, to deny the possibility of destructive inundations in Holland, we should wonder at the folly of such men.

And if, again, the inhabitants of such a happy World as I have been supposing, were to doubt the possible existence of either bad *Spirits* or bad *men*, there would, in this, be nothing very absurd. But, for those who have the experience of the various evils produced by bad men, to deny the possibility of any *other* evil Beings, as a thing which could never have been permitted, is an absurdity which, to be refuted, needs only to be plainly stated.

The difficulty, then, which those bold interpreters I have been alluding to set themselves to explain away, is one which, after all, they do not, in reality, get over, or at all diminish.

And now observe how great is the new difficulty they raise up, in their rash and

vain attempt. Him whom they acknowledge as having "come into the World to bear witness of the *truth*,"—Him and his Apostles, they represent as not merely conniving at, but deliberately confirming and establishing a superstitious error. It cannot be said that this error was one unconnected with Religion. The case is not at all like that of the employment in Scripture of expressions conformable to popular belief on points of astronomy. For revelation was not given for the purpose of instructing men in what relates to the Earth's motion, and other matters pertaining to science. And accordingly, our Lord, and the Prophets, and the Apostles, spoke in popular language of the rising and setting of the Sun and Moon, because such language sufficiently conveyed their meaning, and any different expressions would have been, in those days, wholly unintelligible.

But indeed one may even say, that, relatively to *us* the Sun does rise and set; since its position relatively to us is all that we mean, or are thinking of, when we speak of sunrise and sunset. And accord-

ingly men do speak thus, even at this day, who are perfectly aware that it is the Earth's revolution that causes the alternations of day and night.

"Suppose you bid any one proceed in a straight line from one place to another, and to take care to arrive before the sun goes down. He will rightly and fully understand you, in reference to the practical object which alone you had in view. Now, *you* perhaps know very well that there cannot be *a straight line* on the surface of the earth, which is a *sphere*, [globe]; and that the sun does not really *go down*, only, our portion of the earth is turned away from it. But whether the other person knows all this or not, matters nothing at all with reference to your present object; which was not to teach him mathematics or astronomy, but to make him conform to your directions, which are equally intelligible to the learned and the unlearned.

"Now the object of the Scripture revelation is to teach men, not Astronomy or Geology, or any other Physical Science, but *Religion*. Its design was to inform men, not *in what manner* the world was made,

but WHO made it; and to lead them to worship Him, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, instead of worshipping his creatures, the heavens and earth themselves, as gods."

But on the other hand, the error—supposing it such—to which Christ and his Apostles are represented as "accommodating" themselves, was one not relating to speculative points of natural Science, but intimately connected with Religion; and it was moreover a matter in which the contradiction of the popular belief would have been easy and perfectly *intelligible;* being in fact the very doctrine then held by the Sadducees.

Nor can it be said that Jesus and his Apostles merely *left* men in their belief, not thinking it worth while to undeceive them, and trusting that in time they would of themselves discover their mistake. On the contrary, our Lord and his followers very decidedly and strongly *confirm* the doctrine, by numerous express declarations.

For instance, our Lord, in his explanation of "the Parable of the Tares and the Wheat," says expressly that the Enemy

who sowed the Tares is the Devil. And again, in explaining that portion of the Parable of the Sower, in which it is said that the birds devoured the seed that fell on the trodden way-side, He says, "Then cometh the Devil and taketh away the Word out of their hearts," &c.

And there are very many other passages in which our Lord and his Apostles do not merely leave uncontradicted, or merely assent to, what is said by others as to this point, or merely allude to it incidentally, but go out of their way, as it were, to assert the doctrine most distinctly, and earnestly dwell on it.*

If, therefore, the belief in evil-spirits is altogether a vulgar error, it certainly is not an error which Jesus and his Apostles merely neglected to correct, or which they merely connived at, but which they decidedly inculcated.

Now if such be the real character of our Sacred Writers, — if they judged such a

* In order not to break too much the thread of the discourse, I have brought together in a note at the end of this Lecture, several passages which strongly illustrate what is here said.

"pious fraud" as this, justifiable and right, any man of common sense and common honesty must distrust them altogether. For, how can one be sure—he may say—at what point their pious frauds are to *stop?* Why may they not have thought it allowable, and necessary, to invent all the accounts of miracles, in accommodation to the popular belief, that the promised Messiah was to work miracles? And why may they not have put into his mouth doctrines which He never taught? And why may they not, throughout, have made any number of assertions, on any point whatever, which were true indeed in a certain mystical, hidden sense, understood by themselves, but utterly untrue in the sense in which they knew that they would be understood by their hearers and readers? How, in short, can one be justified in giving any credit at all to those whom we suppose to have been knowingly and wilfully deceiving their hearers?

Now all this unbelief may not really be in the minds of those rash interpreters I have been alluding to. But they should remember that the principle they have laid

down is one which *every* man will feel himself at liberty to apply as he may think fit. "*You* believe," he may say, "the narratives of the christian *miracles* to be literally true, while you regard all that the same persons say about evil-spirits to be a mere accommodation to vulgar prejudices, and to be utterly untrue in its literal sense; because that appears to you improbable: *I* extend the same kind of interpretation to the miraculous narratives also, because, to me, these also appear improbable: and you cannot blame me for using the same liberty that you use yourselves."

It is worth while for these interpreters to consider also what kind of impression they create respecting *themselves;*—what is the picture they are drawing of their own moral character. There is no reason why *their own* language should not be interpreted according to the same rules which they apply to that of the New-Testament. For "with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

"Here is a man," it may be said, "professing to believe in the divine origin of Christianity, and to regard our Sacred

Writers as the appointed teachers of a true revelation from Heaven, who yet represents them as encouraging and propagating a superstitious error, in compliance with popular prejudices. He will not therefore be likely to have any scruple of doing, himself, what he considers allowable and right in these his religious guides. Perhaps, therefore, his own profession of belief in the Gospel may be only a similar "*accommodation*" to what he looks on as the prejudices of his own time. And when he speaks of Jesus Christ as a Heaven-sent messenger, it may be his own secret meaning that Jesus was in reality no more than a remarkably wise man, like the Athenian Socrates, or the Chinese Confucius; and that all the miraculous narratives in our Scriptures are fabulous."

We have, indeed, no right to pronounce positively that such *is* the opinion of every one who interprets Scripture in the way I have been speaking of: but no one can be sure that it is *not*. And such a person, accordingly, though he *may* be, in fact, a believer in Christianity, ought not to complain or to wonder if the contrary is sus-

pected; since he can offer no reasonable proof of his sincerity. By his own showing, if he *did* look on the Gospel as "a cunningly-devised fable," he would yet have no scruple in strongly expressing his belief in it, and in propagating it as a genuine revelation. His own words, interpreted according to his own rules, are quite consistent with his being an unbeliever.

And such suspicions not only are, in themselves, nothing unfair or unreasonable, but are greatly strengthened by experience of what actually does take place. For in modern times, persons have been found who actually do interpret *other* parts of the Gospel-narratives on a similar plan. They represent the Disciples (how they *came to be* disciples, these persons do not tell us) as having been led by zeal for their Master's honour, to exaggerate and misrepresent some occurrences, and to invent others. The sick persons, for instance, healed by Him, they represent as having *accidentally* recovered just at the time when they were brought to Him. His walking on the water was, they tell us, merely a mode of expressing that He *waded* along a

shallow portion of the Lake! And the five thousand were fed, not with the bread distributed to them by the Disciples, but with what some of themselves had brought with them: which, on that supposition, must have amounted to about *fifty hundred-weight;* a quantity too conspicuous, certainly, to have admitted of any deception.

All this would be simply ridiculous, from its excessive absurdity, if it were not so profanely presumptuous. And yet men are to be found, professedly at least, believing such things, and, all the while, imagining themselves not credulous!

Then, again, come others who sweep away with merited contempt all this tissue of extravagance, and declare that all the miraculous accounts in the Gospels were invented in the third or fourth century, after the religion had been firmly established in men's minds, and when it was received with such reverential awe, that stories of miracles connected with it were received with ready credence.

These theologians (for such they call themselves) forget that they have substituted for those absurd interpretations

which they discard, another absurdity quite equal to any of them. They tell us of what they suppose happened in *the Christian-world*, when the Gospel had been fully established; but they forget to tell us *how* it came to be established. For—as one of the ancient Fathers, Origen, has justly observed—the introduction and prevalence of such a religion, in spite of the vehement opposition of Jew and Gentile, preached by a few poor and unlearned fishermen and peasants, *without* supernatural powers, would have been far more wonderful than any of the miracles recorded.

But such theories as I have been alluding to, have received in these days more attention than they merit, from their having been maintained by men of real learning, and of a certain kind of ingenuity. For, many persons are not enough aware how much of knowledge of books, and of acuteness in *reference to single points*, may be sometimes found in men of very weak judgment as to the *whole* evidence on any question. And this, when combined with great self-conceit, and strong prejudice, has led some learned men into such absurdities

as would, on any other subject except Religion, expose a man to universal derision.

* For instance, suppose some Historian maintaining that the vast armies which Napoleon Buonaparte is described as bringing into the field, and his prodigious trains of artillery, and his wonderful victories, are far beyond the bounds of credibility, and are to be set down as legendary fables, or, what are in modern times called *Myths;* and adding, that these splendid Legends were gradually invented, and more and more exaggerated, in order to do honour to this Napoleon, *after* he had attained an Empire; he having raised himself from a very humble station to that Empire, and subjugated the greater part of Europe, at the head of a handful of *unarmed* followers, and without fighting any battles at all. If any one were supposed serious in maintaining such a theory (which is, in fact, just parallel to those I have been alluding to), he would be reckoned an idiot or a madman.

* See *Historic Doubts relative to Napoleon Buonaparte.*

An undue degree of deference is also obtained by such persons as I have been speaking of, from their professing to *be believers* in Christianity. Their theories, and their objections, which are, in fact, nothing new, are, in this way, enabled to assume a new shape. Formerly, all persons who rejected, or sought to invalidate, the statements of our Sacred Writers, used to profess themselves opponents of Christianity. But in these days, the same arguments—such as they are—are brought forward by persons professing themselves Christians, and proclaiming their high veneration for the Gospel. It is as if the assailants of some Fortress should assume the garb of its defenders, and thus obtain admission within its walls, that they might batter them more easily than from without.

And thus the unwary are liable to be deceived, by being told that "sundry *eminent Divines* hold so and so," and that "several *learned Theologians* interpret this or that passage in such and such a way," and that "such is the opinion of *Rationalists*," that is, persons who give "rational" interpretations of all things; these professed

Theologians being merely revivers of what was advanced long ago by avowed Infidels; and their pretended "rational" interpretations being most extravagantly *ir*rational.

And what makes these attacks the more insidious, is that they are made by several different persons, of different views; each preparing the way for the next. One, perhaps, while professing—and very likely with sincerity—to be a believer in the truth of the Gospel-narrative generally, yet imputes to the Writers a pious fraud in reference to such and such a particular point. Another goes a step further, and considers them to have falsified their narratives in some *other* things which must have come under their own knowledge. And these again are followed by another, who rejects or explains away all the remainder, as a tissue of fables.

And all these equally professing themselves Christians, it becomes difficult to determine where Christianity ends and infidelity begins.

Now perhaps some persons may say, it is better not to take any notice at all of these extravagant conjectures and theories

and objections, for fear of alarming and unsettling the minds of plain, unlearned people, who had probably never heard of anything of the kind. Let them continue to read their Bible without being disturbed by any doubts or suspicions that might make them uneasy.

Now, if in some sea-chart for the use of Mariners, the various rocks and shoals which a vessel has to pass in a certain voyage, were to be wholly omitted, and no notice taken of them, no doubt many persons might happen to make the voyage safely, and with a comfortable feeling of security, from not knowing at all of the existence of any such dangers. But suppose some one did strike on one of these rocks, from not knowing—though the makers of the chart did—of its existence, and consequently perished in a shipwreck which he might have been taught to avoid, on whose head would his blood lie?

And again, if several voyagers came to suspect, from vague rumours, that rocks and shoals (perhaps more formidable than the real ones) did lie in their course, without any correct knowledge where they lay, or

how to keep clear of them, then, so far from enjoying freedom from apprehension, they would be exposed to increased alarm, and much of it needless alarm, without being, after all, preserved from danger.

And so it is in the present case. Vague hints that learned men have objected to such and such things, and have questioned this or that, often act like an inward slow-corroding canker in the minds of some who have never read or heard anything distinct on the subject; and who, for that very reason, are apt to imagine these objections, &c., to be much more formidable than they really are. For there are people of perverse mind, who, really possessing both learning and ingenuity, will employ these to dress up in a plausible form something which is, in truth, perfectly silly: and the degree to which this is sometimes done, is what no one can easily conceive without actual experience and examination.

I have thought myself bound therefore to take some notice of the groundless and fanciful theories and interpretations contained in books which probably most of you will never see, and which some of you per-

haps will never even hear of; because I know that many persons are a good deal influenced by reports and obscure rumours of the opinions of some supposed learned and able man, without knowing distinctly what they are; and are likely to be made uneasy and distrustful by being assured that this or that has been disputed, and so and so maintained by some person of superior knowledge and talents, who has proceeded on "*rational*" grounds; when perhaps they themselves are qualified, by their own plain sense, to perceive how *ir*rational these fanciful notions are, and to form a right judgment on the matters in question.

For, these two things are what any man of honesty, and candour, and common sense, is competent clearly to perceive:

1st. That Jesus did *not* accommodate Himself to the religious prejudices of his time and country; else, He would not have been rejected and crucified by his countrymen; who would have received Him gladly if he would have consented to fall in with their notions, and to become such a King as their expectations were fixed on.

And 2ndly, That his followers would never

have knowingly exposed themselves, as they did, to scorn, and prosecution, and violent death, but in the cause of a religion which they believed true, and in attestation of what they had plainly seen and heard: and that consequently we must, if we would be Christians indeed, and fellow-disciples with them,—receive their words (in all that relates to religion) as true, and true in the sense in which they themselves knew that they were understood.

What is revealed to us, therefore, in Scripture on various points,—and, among the rest, concerning Evil-spirits,—is to be received, (however different it may be from what we might have conjectured,) with humble faith and reverend docility.

But *what* it is that is thus revealed, and for what *reasons* that revelation was bestowed—these are points on which we may be allowed, with becoming caution, to inquire. And on these points I shall make some observations in the next Lecture.

NOTE REFERRED TO AT PAGE 70.

* [*John*, viii. 44.] "Ye are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it."

[1 *Tim.* iii. 6.] "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the Devil."

[2 *Tim.* ii. 26.] "And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the Devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

[1 *Ep. Peter*, v. 8.] "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

[1 *Ep. John*, iii. 8.] "He that committeth sin is of the Devil; for the Devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil."

[*Hebr.* ii. 14.] "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil."

[*Rev.* xx. 2.] "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years."

LECTURE V.

Reasons for revealing to Man the existence of Evil-spirits.

IT was pointed out in the preceding Lecture that the existence and agency of Evil-spirits—impossible as it may be to explain it—is what must be acknowledged by any one who receives Jesus Christ and his Apostles as God's messengers commissioned to reveal to us a true religion. For they would *not* have been such if they had either been ignorant of the truth in an important point connected with religion, or if they had wilfully deceived men.

And it was remarked also, that any one who imputes to them the most base and disingenuous sacrifice of truth, in compliance with popular prejudices, and who resorts to the most extravagant and forced interpretation of their words, for the sake of avoiding the plain sense of them, gains nothing after all; since we know that

evil does exist in the world—that mankind are liable to afflictions and temptations—and that they are often exposed to these through the wickedness of their fellow-creatures; who are permitted—we cannot tell why—to molest in various ways, and to seduce into sin, those around them.

But though it would be most absurd to deny the existence of anything merely because we cannot explain it, and though the existence of evil is beyond our power to explain, we may be permitted (as I have observed above), reverently to inquire what it is that is revealed to us on such and such points, and for what purposes that revelation was made.

For there is a wide difference between inquiring why so and so *exists*, or has *taken place*, and inquiring why it was made *known to us* in Scripture. In many cases where the former of these inquiries would be fruitless and presumptuous, the latter may be both allowable and profitable.

In the first place then, you may observe, that (as has been remarked above) the *gods* —so called-of the heathen-nations—the Beings those people had been accustomed to

adore who were afterwards converted to Christianity, and who then constituted the far greatest part of the early Christians, —these Beings were believed to be the evil-demons which the Jews held in abhorrence. This was a point in which the two parties—the Jews and the Gentiles—were fully agreed. Though to the Jews these beings were an abomination, and the worship of them regarded as impious, while the Pagans built temples and offered sacrifices and prayers to them, their real *existence* was admitted by both. And it was therefore quite necessary that this belief should be, in the Christian-scriptures, not wholly passed over, but noticed in some way or other. Supposing the truth to have been that both parties were under a delusion, and that no such Beings as these demons had any existence except in a distempered imagination, then, it would have been requisite distinctly to declare this on divine authority, and to free men's minds from all vain hopes and fears, and superstitious fancies in that quarter. On the other hand supposing some such Beings to have a real existence—supposing some,

even though a few out of many—of the gods worshipped by the heathen, to have agreed, even though only partially, with the real description of actually-existing demons,—supposing this, it was evidently needful that Jesus and his Apostles should make some mention of such Beings, for the purpose of putting men on their guard against either being seduced into the worship of them, or any other danger from them; and also for the purpose of dispelling any false terrors, and of giving assurance of Christ's effectual protection, and final triumph over these adversaries.

But a circumstance which tends to confuse and perplex many readers as to this point, is, that our translators have employed the word "devils" instead of—what the Original requires—"demons." The word Diabolos (*i. e.* Slanderer or Defamer; from which our word "Devil" is formed) is employed by our Sacred Writers as a title of a single individual, Satan (*i. e.* the *Adversary*), a prince or leader of Evil-spirits; and accordingly is never used by them in the plural number. The others are called by them his "Angels," (*i. e.* Emis-

saries or Messengers) or "Unclean-Spirits," or "Demons." Whenever, therefore, you meet in Scripture with the word "devils," you should always substitute for it that which is in the Original—Demons.

Now this is the very title which the Pagans themselves gave to the very objects of their worship.

By using this precaution, you will understand the Sacred Writers much the more clearly, and will perceive the truth of what has just been said, respecting the necessity there was for making some mention of Beings which were in fact the very gods the Heathen intended to worship.

Thus we find the Apostle Paul saying (in 1 Cor. x. 19—20) "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to Demons, and not to God; and I would not that ye should have fellowship with Demons." It is strange that many persons should have been so much mistaken as they have been, respecting the "real character of the Pagan religions. They sometimes imagine that all men, in every Age and Country, have always designed to worship one Supreme God, the Maker of all things; and that the

error of the Pagans consisted merely in the false accounts they gave of Him, and in their worshipping other inferior gods besides.

"But this is altogether a mistake. Few, if any, of the ancient Pagans ever thought of worshipping a Supreme Creator at all. Those who believed, or suspected, that the world had been created, never pretended that it was the work of any of the gods they worshipped. Many thought that the world was not created, but eternal. And others thought, that though it had a beginning, it was the production of what they called chance; that is, they fancied that the matter of which the world consists, moved about at random, and accidentally fell into the shape it now bears.

"These persons were what *we* should call *Atheists*. For, by the word GOD, we understand the Eternal Being, who made and who governs all things. And if any one should deny that there *is* any such Being, we should say that he was an Atheist;—that is, one who believes in *no God*. And even though he might believe that there do exist Beings *superior to man*,—such as the Fairies

and Genii which, in many parts of the world, are believed in,—still he would not be the less an Atheist.

"Accordingly the Apostle Paul (2 Eph. 12) expressly calls the ancient Pagans Atheists;* though he well knew that they worshipped certain supposed superior Beings which they called gods. But he says, in the Epistle to the Romans, that they 'worshipped the creature more than the Creator.' And at Lystra,† when the people were going to do sacrifice to him and Barnabas, mistaking them for two of their gods, he told them to 'turn from these vanities to serve the *Living God*, who *made heaven and earth.*'

"This is what is declared in the first sentence of the Book of Genesis. And so far were the ancient Pagans from believing that 'in the beginning God made the heavens, and the earth,' that on the contrary, the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and many other natural objects, were among *the very gods they adored.*

* "This word does not appear in our version; but the Apostle uses the very word Atheoi, from which our word 'atheist' is taken."

† Acts, iv.

"The heavens,—that is, the sky,—the atmosphere around us,—they worshipped under the titles of Zeus, or Dis—of Jupiter, or Jove—and (among the Canaanites and Babylonians) of Baal, Bel, or Belus. They worshipped the earth also under the title of Demeter and Cybele; called by our Anglo-Saxon ancestors Hertha, (whence our words 'earth,' and 'hearth,') and by them most especially venerated. The Pagans also worshipped the sea, under the title of Neptune; the sun, under that of Phœbus, or Apollo; and the moon, under that of Diana. These last they called the son and daughter of Jove; meaning that the sun and moon were produced by the heavens."*

"The ancient Pagans seem to have supposed that certain living spirits resided in, and ruled over, the air, the sun, moon, earth, and sea. And besides these, they also worshipped a number of other supposed Beings, who presided over the several passions, and faculties, and actions of man. Thus Minerva was the goddess of Wisdom;

* This and some following passages are extracted from *Lessons on Religious Worship.*

and Mars the god of War: and they often used the word Minerva to signify *intelligence*, and Mars to signify *valour*. So Hermes [or Mercury] was a supposed Being presiding over *traffic*, and also over *eloquence*. And thence it was that the Lystrans 'called Paul Mercurius, because he was the chief *speaker*,' (Acts, ch. xiv. 12.)

"None of the ancient Pagans considered any of their gods as *eternal*. They generally supposed them *immortal*—that is, exempt from *death*; but they generally had some tradition about the *birth* of each of them. Indeed, several of them were confessedly dead men, whom they imagined to have been raised to the ranks of the gods by their great deeds on earth. Thus Romulus, the founder of Rome, was worshipped by the Romans under the title of Quirinus. And Hercules, and many others, worshipped by the ancient Pagans, were deified men, supposed to have gained immortality by their eminent virtues, and especially by their feats of war."

"The very best of these gods were represented by them as capricious and profligate

tyrants, whom they worshipped more from fear than love. One in particular, who was especially dreaded, was Pan, who was accounted the God of Shepherds. In particular, they attributed to him all sudden and unaccountable *terrors*, such as sometimes seize armies or other large bodies of men, and which have thence received the name of *Panic*. Their images represent him as partly in the human form, and partly in that of a goat, with horns and cloven hoofs. And hence it is that, by a kind of tradition, we often see, even at this day, representations of Satan in this form. For the early Christians seem to have thought that it was *he* whom the Pagans adored under the name of Pan.

"This is certain; that several savage tribes at this day profess to believe in a *good* god and an evil one; and address all their *worship*, and offer their sacrifices to the *evil* one. They suppose that the good Being will, of his own accord, without being asked, do all the good in his power; and all their prayers and offerings are to the Evil One,—or to several evil Beings,—whose malice they hope to soften."

"As for the kind of worship which the Pagans paid to their gods, it was very much what might have been expected, considering what kind of Beings these gods were, according to their own accounts of them. When Moses is cautioning the Israelites against being led away by the example of their idolatrous neighbours, he says, "every abomination unto the Lord which He hateth, have these nations done *unto their gods;* for even their sons and their daughters have they burned in the fire unto their gods." And the inhabitants of the South Sea Islands, at this day, offer human victims to their gods; as did also the people of Mexico. The grossest profligacy, and the most atrocious cruelties, were not only not forbidden by the Pagan religions, but were even a *part* of their religious worship; especially at the festivals of their god Bacchus. And even the best of their gods were supposed to be more gratified by costly offerings and splendid temples, than by a pure and virtuous life in their worshippers. This, indeed, was quite natural; since these gods were described as not only themselves committing the most abominable actions, but as

patrons of such actions. Mercury, for instance, was reckoned the god, not only of traffic, but of cheating; and the Romans had a goddess of *thieves*, called Laverna, who was regularly worshipped as well as the rest. Mars and Bellona, the god and goddess of war, are described as delighting in human carnage.

"And indeed there are, in modern languages, words still in use, derived from the Pagan religions, and generally signifying something *evil*. Thus the word *Martial*, derived from the god *Mars*, signifies 'pertaining to war,'—that scourge and disgrace of mankind. *Panic* as applied to groundless *terror*, has been already mentioned as derived from Pan. And *bacchanalian*, signifying drunken revelling, is so called from the Bacchanals, the worshippers who took part in the festivals of Bacchus. *Jovial*, derived in the same manner from Jove, has nearly the same meaning: and other such instances might be added."

"We are apt to read with great astonishment, of the Israelites who so often fell into the idolatry of their Pagan neighbours, after having had the true God revealed to them.

Although He had so earnestly warned them not to worship any other gods we find them continually joining the worship of Baal and other heathen gods with that of Jehovah. This appears to some persons so strange as to be hardly credible; and yet the very same thing is going on, almost before our eyes, in Christian countries at this very day. For in all parts of Europe the most uneducated portion of the people in remote districts are found to believe in, and fear, various superhuman Beings, which are in reality no other than the gods of their Pagan forefathers. And though they do not give them the title of *gods*, they often pay them great reverence, and make some kind of offerings to them.

"In some parts of Great Britain and of Ireland, *fairies* are believed in and venerated. In Scotland, besides these, we hear of *bogles*, *brownies*, and *kelpies*, as names of certain superhuman Beings dreaded by the superstitious. In Denmark and Iceland we hear of *trolls;* in Germany of *nixes*, and many other such Beings, who are supposed to have power in human affairs. In Norway, the country people are said to

make an offering of a cake once a year to a demon which they dread; and also, of the first cheese that is made each spring. In some parts of our own country, a cottier's wife will not venture to bake bread or churn butter, without offering a portion to the fairies. And several other such acts of superstitious devotion are practised in various parts of Europe.

Now, there is every reason to believe that all these Beings who are thus reverenced, are,—as we have already said,—the very *heathen gods* which were formerly worshipped in each country. And the persons who show them this reverence, and who seek their help, and dread to displease them, and aim at obtaining their good-will, are doing exactly the same as the Israelites of old when they worshipped Baal and Astaroth, and other gods of the heathen.

"But what misleads people in their notions on this subject, is, that the *words* we use are not the same as the ancient Pagans used. What were formerly called by some name answering to 'gods,' are now called 'fairies,' or 'kelpies,' or genii, &c., and the *reverence* shown them is not called *worship;*

and the offerings made to them are no longer called *sacrifices*. And thus it is that professed Christians deceive themselves by means of words, and fancy that they are not paying *worship* to any *gods* besides the Lord, though they are doing the same thing under other names."

"With respect to the way in which false religions were first introduced, there can be no doubt that they must have crept in gradually. For men would not all at once forsake the worship of the Great Creator, and forget his very existence, and serve other gods *instead* of Him. But it is likely, that when they had come to imagine certain inferior spirits to reside in the sun and moon, the sea, rivers, groves, &c., they would next be led to call upon these Beings, in the hope that *perhaps* such prayers might be heard. And when once the practice has arisen, of men's *adding on* to the worship of the Most High, some invocations of other, inferior, Beings, this latter kind of worship always tends to prevail over and drive out the other. Men seem to think that an inferior Being, who approaches nearer to their own nature, is more likely to feel

sympathy with them, and perhaps is also more likely to be gratified by their adoration and their offerings, than the Supreme God. And even at this day there are some Pagan nations who are said to acknowledge the existence of a Great Being, who is the Supreme Ruler of all things, but whom they think it would be presumptuous for them to address; so that all their worship is reserved for some supposed gods of a lower order."

Such, then, being the religions of the Pagan nations, who comprised the far greater portion of mankind at the time of our Lord's coming, you will plainly see how needful it was that He who came into the World for the purpose of overthrowing those religions, should make some revelations to Men on the subject of their false-worship, and the objects of it.

The accounts, however, that are given in Scripture both of good and of evil Angels, are (as I formerly remarked to you) far more scanty than we should probably have found in any pretended revelation coming from an enthusiast or an impostor, seeking to gratify idle curiosity by detailed descrip-

tions of whatever is marvellous and exciting to the imagination.

The Bible, on the contrary, acts the part of a judicious Physician, who, instead of entertaining his patients with a long and curious dissertation—such as they could little comprehend—on the nature and origin of their disease, employs himself in actively administering remedies, and teaching them how to *avoid* disease.

It appears, however, from slight hints thrown out in various passages of Scripture, that the evil-spirits are "Angels who kept not their first estate;" that is, who by disobedience and rebellion against God, fell from the condition (perhaps, as I formerly hinted, a state of trial, such as we are in now) in which they had once existed, and becoming pre-eminently depraved, and enemies to the Lord, sought, and still seek, to corrupt mankind, and to draw us into a like rebellion.*

* Some have thought that the fallen angels alluded to in the Epistle of Jude are not the same as Satan and his angels elsewhere mentioned, because the former are spoken of as "chained," while the Devil is described as "going about seeking whom he may devour." But the

97184

It appears, moreover, from the general tenour of Scripture that these evil Beings have a Prince or Leader of superior power, who drew away a great multitude with him, and exercises authority over them.

And hence it is that we sometimes find mention made of "*The* Devil"—"The Evil-One"—"The Adversary" [or "Satan"] as a single Being, and as the author, singly, of many mischiefs which are going on in several different places at the same time; and sometimes, again, of these same mischiefs attributed to "unclean Spirits," [or "Demons"] as to many distinct agents. But both these kinds of expressions are such as we very commonly employ in speaking of human affairs. We are accustomed

Apostle cannot be supposed to be speaking of *literal* chains, or literal *darkness*. He is evidently using a figure taken from the condition of condemned malefactors, chained in a gloomy dungeon, awaiting their final doom. And these may very well serve to illustrate the condition of Beings sunk into a degraded and wretched state, and not left at full liberty, but restrained from the full exercise of their powers. There does not seem, therefore, to be much force in the above objection.

We have not, however, any such clear revelation on this point as will enable to decide confidently, and to make this an article of the Faith.

to speak of one King, or Commander of a numerous host, as doing, himself, many things which are actually performed by his servants, or soldiers, under his directions.

When, therefore, we find Christians warned by the Sacred Writers against the wiles of the Devil, and exhorted to resist him who goeth about seeking whom he may devour, we need not be at a loss to understand this, from not being able to conceive his being present to the minds of many men at the same time; since a leader and master may be said (and commonly is said) to *do* that which is done by his servants, agents, or messenger; *i.e.*, (in the language of Scripture) by his "Angels."

And not only is this intelligible in itself, but moreover our Lord expressly speaks of such a host of evil-spirits under the control of one Chief, where He speaks of "everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels."

For aught we know, there may be a host of evil-spirits, more numerous, perhaps, than the whole human Race; some or other of whom may be (and the Scriptures lead us to believe that they are) in various places

at the same time, watching to seduce men to their ruin;—"seeking," as the Apostle Peter expresses it, "whom they may devour."

It is an awful—an appalling thought,—that we may be, this moment, and at every moment, in the presence of malignant Spirits, who are watching occasions for our destruction?

And it is, perhaps, partly because the thought of this is unpleasant, that some persons who proceed on the principle of believing only just as much of Scripture as suits their own views or tastes, and explaining away the rest, have presumed (as I have already said) to deny the agency of evil-spirits altogether, and to explain the Scripture-language on this subject as mere figures of speech—as a mere personification of moral-evil—which, they say, is there spoken of as an evil-spirit, in accommodation to the popular notions of the time.

But I would wish such persons to consider whether it would be at all more presumptuous, and whether it would not be less *immoral*, even to reject the whole of the Gospel at once, and to deny that Jesus

was really sent from God, than to acknowledge that He was so sent, to preach the TRUTH, and yet to charge Him and his Apostles with deliberately propagating falsehood and superstition. For this they evidently must have done, if their plain assertions respecting Satan and his Angels, which they must have known were literally understood, are not literally true.

And after all (as I have already observed) nothing is gained by such a forced interpretation of Scripture. It does not forward us a single step in the explanation of the real difficulty (a very great one, certainly) the permission of evil and of sin in the World. We know that these do exist. We see men yielding to temptation and falling into sin. And it makes no difference as to the difficulty of accounting for this, whether it is produced by the agency of evil-spirits, or by the seductive examples and persuasions of wicked men. If we cannot account for Satan being permitted to labour for the ruin of Man's soul, as little can we account for *men's* being so permitted: which yet, we see, is the fact. There is, in short, as was observed above, no *greater*

difficulty in the permission of wicked *Spirits* than of wicked *men.*

But, it may be said, why should this doctrine be *revealed* to us in Scripture, if the belief of it makes no *practical* difference? Why should we be warned against Evil-Spirits, or why should they be mentioned at all, if the same caution might have been taught by merely warning us against temptations to sin?

One of the reasons why some revelation on this subject was judged necessary, may have been that which was noticed in the beginning of this Lecture;—to warn men against being seduced into the *worship* of those beings which, at the first introduction of Christianity most of the World had been accustomed to worship.

And I think another practical purpose for which the doctrine in question was revealed, may, without much difficulty, be perceived. Whether anything be made known, or not, concerning the existence of Evil-Spirits, makes indeed no difference as to the difficulty of *explaining* the existence of evil; but it may make a great difference as to the *avoiding* of evil. And the great

object of Scripture-revelations, throughout, seems to be, to assist us, not, in *accounting* for evil, but in escaping it; not, to increase our speculative knowledge, but our virtuous practice.

Now I would appeal to the feelings of any right-minded man, whether the greater dread and detestation of sin is not likely to be produced by our being plainly informed that there are Evil-Spirits striving to seduce and deceive—or, to urge and drive us—into rebellion against God. Supposing the temptation to be, in all other respects, equally strong, is not a Christian the more likely to withstand it, from knowing that it arises not from *things* only, but from *persons*—even the malignant Spirits who have our final destruction in view?

It is true, the thought of being given up to the base and brutish propensities of the meaner portion of man's nature—of losing the proper dignity of a rational Being—of forgetting God and living as strangers and aliens before Him,—and of forfeiting immortal happiness,—all this is indeed very shocking to a well-disposed mind, but yet not *so* horrible and appalling as the thought

of being ruled over and directed by an Evil-Spirit—of cherishing in our bosom the great Enemy of mankind, or agents of his, who hate both God and us, and who are busied in preparing men to share in their final ruin.

And even the final doom of those who shall have been seduced by these tempters, is rendered—as our Lord seems plainly to imply—the more terrific from its being shared with them; since He forewarns us of impenitent sinners being sentenced to the "fire prepared for the Devil and his angels."

Now since there *is* (however unable we may be to explain why) such a thing as sin, and as a punishment for it in the next World, the more detestable and frightful the thoughts of these can be made to our mind,—the more distinctly we view them in all their proper horrors,—the more likely we are to escape them. God would not indeed have taught us the existence of Satan and his angels, merely to alarm us, if it had not been *true:* but, it being true, it is in his *mercy* He has set before us all the horrible reality, that we may be the more

active and resolute in seeking to escape and to guard against such an Enemy.

You should observe, therefore, that the very unpleasantness of these thoughts,—which is what has led some men to deny or to explain away the doctrine, and others, to keep it out of their thoughts—is the reason why God has revealed it. He knows that there is a kind of ardour and energy infused into the human breast by the thought of a contest with an *enemy*;—not with a mere *thing*, but a *person*;—an active Being who hates us, and who seeks our destruction, but whom God has given us power to resist if we contend firmly; and over whom we shall finally triumph, under the banner of our great Leader, Christ, if we are not wanting in our own defence.

If you will reflect attentively on the subject, you will not fail, I think, to perceive the truth of what I have been saying. You will find—judging even from your own feelings—that the human mind is so formed as to be more watchfully careful against being overreached and deceived by a *personal enemy*, than against any other kind of temptation;—more zealously active in resisting the

attacks of a *living Being* who seeks our destruction, than in counteracting our own inclinations.

There may perhaps have been another reason—as I hinted in a former Lecture—for revealing to us the existence of good and of evil angels; namely, to give us the benefit of their *example.*

An attentive reader of what is said concerning them in Scripture, cannot but feel it at least not improbable, that the one *fell* into their present state by transgression, and that the other may have *risen* into theirs by faithfully undergoing trials.

This thought—even though it should amount to no more than a probable conjecture—may put us upon considering how to make a right use of this our present state of trial, and also, what will be the end of that trial to each:—that the faithful will be perfected, and made securely happy, and will be exalted to be "equal unto the Angels," and that rebellious and impenitent sinners will be incurably hardened and degraded, and will be finally joined in condemnation with the evil angels, for whom our Lord has expressly assured us a terrible

doom is prepared, (Matt. xxv. 41.) Wherefore "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Some of the principal of the deceits of Satan, by which he wars against the souls of men, I shall touch upon—following closely the guidance of Scripture—in a future Lecture.

It is not only warnings of danger, however, that we find in Scripture, but also assurances of divine help and support against it. And though by your own unassisted powers you are far too weak to wrestle against such foes as you are there warned of, you will be far too strong, when strengthened with the might of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to be subdued by them.

Consider therefore, and examine yourself, whether you are in the habit of seeking this divine aid by habitual and earnest prayer;—whether you labour to be continually and practically sensible of the presence of a spiritual enemy and a spiritual friend;—to be watchful against the devices of that enemy, and full of pious confidence in your divine Protector; assiduous in

calling on Him, and anxiously striving to listen to, and be led by Him.

Recollect that if you were beset by murderous robbers, or by fierce wild beasts, or if you were in a house that had caught fire, or were struggling in the waves of a stormy sea, you would call vehemently for help, to any one who might have even a chance of saving you. And then reflect, whether, amid so much greater danger, from a host of malignant Spirits who seek your eternal destruction, you are equally earnest in calling on Him who has promised to hear, and is surely able to save you;—who is ready to "strengthen such as stand, and to comfort and help the weak-hearted, and to raise up them that fall, and finally, to beat Satan under our feet."

LECTURE VI.

Demoniacs.

BEFORE I proceed to enter more fully on the subject of that agency of evil-spirits which, we have reason to believe, has not ceased in the present day, it will be necessary to take some notice of what is generally thought (and with good reason) not to have any existence in these times—the case of persons possessed by an Evil-spirit (or demon), whence the word "Demoniac" came to be applied to a person so afflicted.

You are aware that there is very frequent mention of, or allusion to, such cases in the New Testament; a large portion of the miraculous cures recorded as performed by our Lord Himself and by his Disciples, consisting in the casting out of "unclean spirits." And these cures are, in some passages, prominently put forward as among the most striking of the miracles performed.

For instance, when Jesus sent forth the Seventy Disciples, to proclaim the "Kingdom of God as at hand," evidently endowing them with miraculous powers, we are told that "The Seventy returned from their mission "with joy, saying, Lord, even the Demons* are subject to us through thy name;" to which He replies, saying, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."

The passages in the New Testament which record these cures, or which in any way relate to the subject, present to the minds of some persons a great and peculiar difficulty, from the circumstance that, as I have said, there is no reason to believe in the existence of any such affliction in the present day, or for many Ages past.

The belief has indeed prevailed, in times long after those of the Apostles, of the occasional occurrence of demoniacal possessions, and of the Evil-spirits being cast out, or, as the expression was, "exorcised." But no *proof* has ever been given of this that could satisfy any but the weakly-credulous.

* My reason for retaining this word as it is in the original, instead of using the word "devils" as in our Version, has been explained in a former Lecture.

And on the other hand, there have been several instances in which it has been fully proved that cases of pretended possessions and cure, have been tricks contrived by crafty impostors taking advantage of the superstition of the ignorant vulgar.

And since it has always been in the most unenlightened Ages and Countries that the readiest belief has been afforded to accounts of this kind, hence some persons have inferred that *all* such accounts have their origin in credulous ignorance, and that nothing of the kind ever did occur at all. There are persons also who, on the same principle, have rejected as fabulous all accounts of *Miracles*, because the ignorant and weak-minded are usually the most ready to give credence to them, and because marvellous Legends of miracles have always abounded most in the least enlightened Times and Regions.

These persons, while giving themselves much credit for philosophical sagacity, do not perceive what such a principle would lead to, if fairly followed out. For instance, ignorant or thoughtless people are often deceived by forged Notes, and by Coins

and other articles, of base metal passed off on them for gold or silver. And there are instances of great quantities of certain glittering stones having been quarried and brought home in ships from distant Countries, under the mistaken idea of these being gold-ore. Now, would it not be most absurd to infer from this that there never was such a thing as a genuine bank-note, or good coin, and that gold is not really existing metal, but imaginary?

In fact, it is the existence of genuine notes and coins, and real gold, that has given rise to forgeries and to mistakes. And in like manner the real occurrence of well-authenticated miracles is just what would naturally lead men to feign or to fancy them when unreal.

And so it is also with demoniacal possession. We cannot indeed conclude positively that if no such thing had ever occurred, nothing of the kind would ever have been pretended or imagined; but of this we may be quite certain; that, supposing such cases did at one time occur, and occur not unfrequently, and were cured by Jesus and his Apostles,—one might fully

expect that there would be pretended or fancied cures of the kind *afterwards*. Whether from the mere mistake of the credulous, or from artful contrivances of designing men, false accounts, in *imitation of the true*, would not fail to arise, as we see take place in all other matters also.

There are, however, some persons who not only are believers in the Christian miracles, but also acknowledge the real existence of evil-spirits, but who yet deny the reality of demoniacal possession, and explain away the passages of Scripture relating to it.

That there *are* great difficulties in the subject is undeniable; but these persons see more difficulties in it than really exist; and, on the other hand, they overlook (as, I formerly observed, many are apt to do) the far greater difficulties which lie on the opposite side.

One of their difficulties is entirely of their own creating. They imagine that this kind of affliction, if real, must have been peculiar to the one nation of the Jews, and that among *them* alone did the belief prevail.

Now this is utterly contrary to the fact; and yet it is far from uncommon to find this notion entertained even by educated persons, not unacquainted with the Works of Greek and Roman Writers.

But they are misled by *names*. The word "devils," which is (unfortunately, as I have above remarked) employed in our Translation of the Bible, instead of "Demons," is never found in any translations of the Classical Writers, where the very same word (of the original) occurs: so that inattentive readers are thus led to suppose that different things are meant, though the Greek word used by the New-Testament Writers, and by the Pagan Writers, is the same. The heathen Authors allude to possession by a *demon* (or by a *god;* for they used the two words with little or no distinction), as a thing of no uncommon occurrence.* We read also in the book of Acts (Chap. xvi.), of a damsel—not in Judæa, but at Philippi of Macedonia, a Roman Colony—possessed by "a Spirit of divination."

And the heathen Writers represented the

* The word "enthusiast" is taken from a Greek word, signifying, originally, a person thus possessed.

Priests and Priestesses of their celebrated Oracles as possessed by a like "Spirit of divination."

Whether any cases of real demoniacal possession did, or did not, ever exist in connexion with those Oracles, is a question we need not now discuss. It is enough for our present purpose that we should be fully aware, and keep steadily in mind, that such was the *belief* among those Pagans no less than among the Jews. The only difference was (and this also has aided in misleading many as to the fact) that, as I formerly observed to you, the Heathen *worshipped*, as their gods, the Beings, or supposed Beings, which the Jews held in detestation as "unclean spirits."

Proceeding, then, on the supposition (which is quite an erroneous one) that the belief in demoniacal possession was peculiar to the Jews, certain interpreters have ventured to maintain that all the supposed "demoniacs" were no other than madmen, whose insane fancies led them to believe themselves possessed by evil-spirits; and that Jesus chose to "accommodate" Himself to the prevailing superstition by calling the

cure of these patients the "casting out of the unclean spirits."

Now, it is certainly not an improbable thing in itself, that some madmen should entertain a groundless fancy of being thus possessed. But that the Jews did not attribute madness, generally, to evil-spirits, and that they distinguished it from cases of "possession," is quite certain. For we read, for instance, (in Mat. x.) that "they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those that were *possessed with Demons*, and those who were *Lunatics*, and those that had the palsy, and He healed them."

And what is more, we find, on the other hand, that the cases recorded are far from being exclusively those of madness: for we read (in Luke, xiii. 11) of "a spirit of *infirmity*," and (in Mat. xii.) of a case of *blindness* and *dumbness*. The belief of the Jews, therefore,—be it, in any case, correct or erroneous,—as to this agency of evil-spirits, could not have been founded on what was said by *insane* patients concerning their own condition. Some marks there must have been—we cannot at all tell what—

which influenced the people of that Age and Country in deciding, whether rightly or wrongly—what afflictions were, and were not, caused by the direct agency of demons.

What these distinguishing marks were, we cannot, as I have said, at all judge; since there is nothing recorded respecting any of the patients to distinguish their afflictions from such as arise every day from bodily causes. That madness, and infirmity, and blindness, and dumbness, may be caused by bodily diseases, not only is well-known by *us*, but, what is much more, was equally well-known by the Jews also. And they were led by some indications or other—we know not what—to decide that some of these patients were, and that others were not, afflicted by the direct agency of evil-spirits.

Assuming, then, (1stly,) that the Jews, alone, of all nations, had this belief in demoniacal possession (which is contrary to the fact) and (2ndly) that all the recorded cases of the casting out of demons were cures of *insane* patients (which is utterly at variance with the History)—assuming all this, those interpreters I have been speaking

of, represent our Lord and his Disciples as "accommodating" themselves, while performing miraculous cures, to the vulgar superstition.

And this they are represented as doing, not in *some* instances merely, but in *all.* This is a circumstance which makes a most important difference. For, if any one believes that there was such a thing as demoniacal possession, but that in this or that particular instance it was supposed to exist when it did not (just as, among us, one disease is sometimes mistaken for another) —such a person may think that there was no need to give the patient's friends any explanation of the case, since it would be a matter of little or no consequence in a religious point of view, as making no difference as to the belief, *generally*, of the doctrine in question. But the case is quite different with one who believes that there *was no such thing* as demoniacal possession at all. For *he* must represent Christ and his Disciples as lending themselves to a prevailing error,—as sanctioning and confirming a doctrine which they knew to be false.

And if such a connivance at religious error can be in *any* case justifiable, in *this* at least it would have been most completely inexcusable. It would not have had even "the tyrant's plea—*necessity*" in its favour. For supposing the Jews ever so much wedded to their belief in demoniacal possession, and to have been disposed to reject with scorn any one who should have *merely told* them that those patients whom they supposed to be possessed were not so, and that the popular opinion was all a delusion,—supposing this, still, if any one who gave them such an assurance did, at the same time, *cure* those very patients, every one would have readily believed him.

To take a parallel case: there are districts in Europe—and even in our own Country—where the vulgar sometimes believe that children, or others, afflicted with some unusual kind of disease, are bewitched by some malicious neighbour; and they would be highly displeased with any one who should, simply, *tell* them that this is a groundless fancy. But if you could go among these superstitious people, and give them this assurance, at the same time instantly and

completely *restoring the sufferers to health* by a word or a touch,—and this not merely in one instance, but in *all* the cases, and those very numerous ones, that were brought before you,—no one can doubt that you would readily be believed.

The connivance, therefore, at superstitious error—the confirmation and propagation of religious delusion—which these interpreters impute to Jesus and his Followers, would have been one of the most *gratuitous* and most inexcusable of all the "pious frauds" that ever were committed. And if there are any persons who, on careful examination and deliberate reflection, feel convinced that Jesus did thus lend Himself to popular superstition, without even any apparent necessity, and who yet regard his conduct as justifiable, and profess to venerate Him as "A Teacher sent from God," what can we think of their moral principles? And what assurance can we have of the sincerity of their own belief on any point?

"The language of the Jews," says one of these expounders, "had been in our Lord's days so tinctured with this superstitious phraseology, that He and his Apostles were

obliged to carry on what had become, and, in the opinion of some persons, still is, a necessary illusion." Now who can feel sure that a man who thinks this procedure allowable and right, may not in his heart believe nothing of the divine origin of Christianity, but may think himself "obliged," in compliance with the prevailing belief, to "carry on the illusion," by professing it?

I would fain hope, however, that many who have adopted such interpretations, have done so inconsiderately, and for want of careful inquiry and reflection. As they have overlooked those parts of the Scripture-history which are plainly at variance with their theory, so, it is likely they have also overlooked the consequences it would lead to;—the difficulties, far greater than those they are seeking to escape, in which that theory involves them.

In particular they should remember, that besides the baseness, in itself, of a religious teacher's fostering and confirming religious error, and the additional baseness of doing so when—as I observed above—it might easily have been avoided,—besides this, whoever fosters any kind of superstitious

error is answerable for all the *consequences* which naturally flow from it.

Now it is notorious that a vast deal of fraud, and mischievous superstition, have arisen in corrupt and dark Ages of the Church, in reference to persons supposed to be possessed by evil-spirits (some, probably, impostors, and others, deranged enthusiasts) whom Priests or others calling themselves exorcists, pretended to cure, by muttering strange words, or sprinkling and fumigating, and other superstitious ceremonies, by which the ignorant multitude were deluded. Now all this, though chiefly or wholly founded on the accounts in Scripture of the casting out of demons by Jesus and his Disciples, is no imputation whatever on *them* (any more than the pretensions which were set up some years ago to a miraculous gift of tongues; evidently founded on the real gifts bestowed on the Apostles)* *supposing*

* Most of my readers will remember that some years ago a set of crazy enthusiasts, mixed, probably, with impostors, used to gabble strange sounds which they called a *language*, though it, confessedly, conveyed no *meaning*, either to any one else, or even to themselves; and which they profanely compared to the miraculous gifts bestowed on the early Christians.

the things recorded in Scripture to be literally true. For, the abuse, and perversion, and spurious imitation, of truth, is no fault of the truth itself, but of Man's weakness or wickedness. But if what the Evangelists have recorded is *not* true—if Jesus and his Apostles confirmed a prevailing superstition, instead of curing it, the shocking consequence must follow, that *they are answerable* for all the mischiefs that have arisen from an error which they fostered instead of removing it.

Great therefore as the difficulties certainly are connected with the Scripture-accounts of the cure of Demoniacs, it is a far greater difficulty, to a man of probity and of good sense, to believe that Teachers really sent from God could be wilful deceivers on a point of religious belief. And this difficulty becomes the greater to each man in proportion to his intellectual and moral advancement;—in proportion as he is of a thoughtful, and of an ingenuous character. And again, one who should resolve—cost what it may—to get rid of *both* these difficulties, must involve himself in a third, which is the greatest of all. For he will have to believe

that these were *not* really heaven-sent Teachers at all, but enthusiasts or impostors, who knowingly exposed themselves to hatred, derision, and persecution, and passed their lives in toils, dangers, and sufferings, for the sake of propagating miraculous stories invented by themselves.*

Lastly, it should be remembered that there are two cases of the agency of evil-spirits recorded, as it should seem, on purpose to guard against such theories as I have been speaking of, and to prove, to all who do sincerely admit the truth of our Scriptures, that the powers, and the agency, attributed to Demons was *not* a mere fanciful description in figurative language, of natural diseases, but literally and undoubtedly a fact. The one is, our Lord's temptation by Satan in the wilderness; and the other, the case in which Jesus is recorded by three of the Evangelists to have relieved a demoniac, and permitted the demons to enter into a herd of swine. This last seems to have taken place, and to have been recorded, with an express design to show the

* See note B, at the end of this Lecture.

difference between a real and an imaginary possession;—to prove that the case was not one of mere natural madness, but a real agency of evil-spirits. For, whatever wild and superstitious fancies *men* are liable to—though the *human* imagination may raise up ideal demons that have no real existence,—brutes at least, we cannot doubt, are exempt from all such delusions. When, therefore, we find vast multitudes of these at once seized with a sudden and extraordinary frenzy, attributed by the Sacred Writers to evil-spirits, we must needs conclude, if we believe them at all, that there was some real and powerful agent operating on these animals.*

* It is remarkable that in this instance, our Lord, contrary to his usual practice, charges the man who was cured to go and proclaim throughout his own country "how great things God had done for him." In districts which Jesus Himself frequented, and where He was daily performing miraculous cures, He chose to leave men to be convinced by what they saw themselves; and even forbad several of those He had relieved to publish the miracles; perhaps, lest their doing so, as *commissioned, or permitted, by Him*, might so exasperate the Jewish Rulers as to bring on, before the time, those proceedings of theirs against Him which terminated in his death. But the Country of the Gadarenes was one which He was quitting after a very short visit, and a

And these two instances are, as I have said, recorded on purpose to show the existence and the power of evil-spirits, and that the accounts of them are not to be explained away as merely the offspring of a superstitious and enthusiastic fancy. In the temptation of the *Son of God*, and in the possession of *brute-animals*, the influence of *imagination* could have no place. In the first, the divine patient was *above* its delusions; in the other, the *brute* was as much below it.

Difficult as are many of the questions relative to the prevalence of this particular kind of affliction, especially, as it should seem, at the time of our Lord's coming, we can perceive, I think, some reason why an extraordinary display of the power and malice of Satan, and of the Saviour's power over him, should be made, just at that time.

single miracle. And there, accordingly, He commissioned the man to proclaim what had been done. This man therefore was *expressly charged* by Jesus to go about reporting what would have been,—supposing there were no such thing as demoniacal possession,—a *falsehood*, known to be such by the Person who so commissioned him.—See Note C, at the end of this Lecture.

Satan had led to Man's fall, and had brought sin and death into the World, by seducing our first Parents. And Jesus Christ who came to redeem mankind from that fallen state, and to restore the hope of the immortal life they had forfeited, was, of course, in so doing, to encounter and overthrow that Tempter who had led to Man's ruin. Accordingly, at the very time when our first Parents were expelled from Paradise, it was promised that "the Seed of the Woman should bruise the Serpent's head." Now that victory over Death and over Satan, "who had the power of death,"* which our Lord thus gained, by Himself submitting to death, was a victory which was to be fully completed and fully displayed only, in another World: even as the immortality to which he restored Man, was not, like that offered to Adam, to begin in this world, but to be reserved for the next. And as EVIL was still, for a season, to remain,—Man continuing liable to pain and natural disease, and death, and exposed to temptation to sin,—so, it was fitting that

* Heb. ii. 14.

Jesus should give, in the course of his ministry, some proof, by way of *specimen*, of his power over these enemies; to show that He was indeed the Redeemer, who would finally manifest his complete triumph over them.

One part, therefore, of his divine office consisted in the curing of natural *diseases*, and in raising up a few persons from natural *death;* as a specimen — together with his own resurrection — of his control over disease and death, and as a confirmation of his promise* to raise up all his faithful disciples at the Last Day.

But it was necessary to display the same superiority over *moral* evil as over physical, by a sensible and perceptible victory not only over disease and death, but also, directly over Satan himself, and the host of evil-spirits under him, by whose malice and wiles moral evil had been brought into the world: in short, by exhibiting the seed of the Woman "bruising the Serpent's head."

In the Books of Moses accordingly, it is remarkable that there is no express mention

* John, vi. 39.

of Satan: who, indeed, is but seldom named in the Old-Testament, and only in the *later* Books of it, in proportion as the prophecies concerning his Conqueror, the promised Redeemer, became more numerous and more distinct.

And it was about the time of that Redeemer's coming, that men were most familiar with the fact of the agency of Satan and his angels. He was to be made manifest, on purpose, it should seem, that Christ's triumph over him might be openly displayed. Hence, we may suppose, it was, that this great Enemy was permitted, about that time more especially, to exercise a direct, perceptible, and acknowledged agency on men, in order to render his defeat the more conspicuous; that we might, as it were, "behold him, like lightning, fall from Heaven."

Nothing accordingly is more dwelt on (as I formerly observed) in the accounts of the miracles wrought by Jesus and his Disciples than the casting out of demons. On the occasion of one of these cures, (recorded in Mat. xii. 22,) that of a man "blind and

dumb,"* we find the people exclaiming, "Is not this the Son of David?" that is, the Messiah (or Christ) whom they rightly expected to be a descendant of David; and of whose character they, so far, rightly judged, in conceiving a triumph over evil-spirits to be a distinguishing mark of Him. And our Lord Himself, and his Disciples dwell no less earnestly (as I remarked above) on this particular class of miracles as characteristic of the Messiah, the Founder of the Kingdom of Heaven. "If I," said He, "in the Spirit of God cast out Demons, then is the Kingdom of God come upon you."†

Such, then, were probably the reasons for permitting this extraordinary and evident display of Satan's power at that particular time; his overthrow, by Him who, as Paul says, "through death overcame him that hath the power of death, that is, the Devil," being thus rendered the more conspicuous. Such at least seem to be the reasons for *making known* to Man that particular.

* Not, you will observe, *insane*, and uttering ravings about being possessed by a demon, which might conceivably have been imaginary.

† Matt. xii. 28. See also Luke, vii. 20—21.

agency of evil-spirits which we have now been speaking of. For we must be careful (as I formerly observed to you) to guard against confounding together what are in reality two very different kinds of inquiry. Why this or that *exists*, or *took place*, is an inquiry which we must enter upon with trembling caution, and which will very often lead to nothing satisfactory. But why so and so is *revealed* to us in Scripture, is a very different inquiry, and in which we may hope often to be successful, and thus to derive the more benefit from what Scripture teaches.

And here I would take occasion to remind you, in reference to what has been said above, that the overthrow of Satan by the Lord Jesus, is not yet *completed;* nor was designed to be so, till the end of this World. Christ expects his followers to be tried like Himself, in proportion to their strength, by waging the same war that He did, against the same enemy. His open victory over Satan, on his first coming, was only a specimen and proof of his power. He only delivered men from forcible and *involuntary* possession by evil-spirits, leav-

ing us still liable to their temptations and deceits, if we chuse to yield to them, or are not watchful against them.

Every one is, in a certain sense (and that in the *worst* way), possessed by the Devil, when he rebels against God by breaking his commandments; and, most especially, when he falls into those particular sins which characterize the very Tempter himself; such as "envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness,"—lying, of which Satan is described as being emphatically "the father"*—and slander, from which the very *title* given him in Scripture is derived. For the English word "Devil," is merely a slight alteration of the original word "*Diabolos*," which signifies "False-accuser," or "Defamer."

And yet how many even of those who profess extraordinary Christian piety, seem even to have a delight in detraction, and allow themselves in the habit of framing or circulating false charges against their neighbours; sometimes with deliberate malice, and sometimes with rash and wanton carelessness about truth!

* John, viii. 44.

We, of the present day, have not the miraculous gifts bestowed on the early Christians, nor have we any reason to believe that their power of casting out evil-spirit from demoniacs is one for which there could even be any occasion, now. But we have, through God's promised help, the more important power of casting out the evil-spirit from our own breasts, and throwing off from ourselves his dominion, and refusing to be "led captive by him, at his will."* Resist, therefore, the Devil, and he will flee from you: draw nigh unto God, and He will draw nigh unto you."†

NOTE B, REFERRED TO AT PAGE 128.

"CONCEIVE then the Apostles of Jesus Christ, the tentmaker or the fisherman, entering, as strangers, into one of the splendid cities of Syria, Asia Minor, or Greece. Conceive them, I mean, as unendowed with miraculous powers, having adopted their itinerant system of teaching, from human motives, and for human purposes alone. As they pass along to the remote and obscure quarter, where they expect to meet with precarious hospitality among their countrymen, they survey the strength of the established religion, which it is their avowed purpose to overthrow. Every where they behold temples on which the utmost extravagance of expenditure has been lavished by succeeding generations; idols of the most exquisite workmanship, to which, even if the religious feeling of adoration

* 2 Tim. ii. 26. † James, iv. 7.

is enfeebled, the people are strongly attached by national or local vanity. They meet processions, in which the idle find perpetual occupation, the young excitement, the voluptuous a continual stimulant to their passions. They behold a priesthood, numerous, sometimes wealthy; nor are these alone wedded by interest to the established faith; many of the trades, like those of the makers of silver shrines in Ephesus, are pledged to the support of that to which they owe their maintenance. They pass a magnificent theatre, on the splendour and success of which the popularity of the existing authorities mainly depends; and in which the serious exhibitions are essentially religious, the lighter as intimately connected with the indulgence of the baser passions. They behold another public building, where even worse feelings, the cruel and the sanguinary, are pampered by the animating contests of wild beasts and of gladiators, in which they themselves may shortly play a dreadful part,

Butcher'd to make a Roman holyday!

Show and spectacle are the characteristic enjoyments of the whole people, and every show and spectacle is either sacred to the religious feelings, or incentive to the lusts of the flesh; those feelings which must be entirely eradicated, those lusts which must be brought into total subjection to the law of Christ. They encounter likewise itinerant jugglers, diviners, magicians, who impose upon the credulous, and excite the contempt of the enlightened: in the first case dangerous rivals to those who should attempt to propagate a new faith by imposture and deception; in the latter, naturally tending to prejudice the mind against all miraculous pretensions whatever: here, like Elymas, endeavouring to outdo the signs and wonders of the Apostles; there throwing suspicion on all asserted supernatural agency, by the frequency and clumsiness of their delusions. They meet philosophers, frequently itinerant like

themselves; or teachers of new religions, priests of Isis and Serapis, who have brought into equal discredit what might otherwise have appeared a proof of philanthropy, and performing laborious journeys at the sacrifice of personal ease and comfort for the moral and religious improvement of mankind; or at least have so accustomed the public mind to similar pretensions, as to take away every attraction from their boldness or novelty. There are also the teachers of the different mysteries, which would engross all the anxiety of the inquisitive, perhaps excite, even if they did not satisfy, the hopes of the moré pure and lofty minded.

"Such must have been among the obstacles which would force themselves on the calmer moments of the most ardent; such the overpowering difficulties, of which it would be impossible to overlook the importance, or elude the force; which required no sober calculation to estimate, no laborious inquiry to discover; which met and confronted them wherever they went, and which, either in desperate presumption, or deliberate reliance on their own preternatural powers, they must have contemned and defied.

"The commencement of their labours was usually disheartening, and ill-calculated to keep alive the flame of ungrounded enthusiasm. They begin their operations in the narrow and secluded Synagogue of their own countrymen. The novelty of their doctrine, and curiosity, secure them at first a patient attention; but as the more offensive tenets are developed, the most fierce and violent passions are awakened. Scorn and hatred are seen working in the clouded brows and agitated countenances of the leaders: if here and there one is *pricked to the heart*, it requires considerable moral courage to acknowledge his conviction: and the new teachers are either cast forth from the indignant assembly of their own people, liable to all the punishments which they are permitted to inflict, scourged and beaten; or, if they succeed in forming a party, they

give rise to a furious schism; and thus appear before the heathen with the dangerous notoriety of having caused a violent tumult, and broken the public peace by their turbulent and contentious harangues: at all events, disclaimed by that very people on whose traditions they profess to build their doctrines, and to whose Scriptures they appeal in justification of their pretensions. They endure, they persevere, they continue to sustain the contest against Judaism and paganism. It is still their deliberate, ostensible, and avowed object to overthrow all this vast system of idolatry; to tear up by the roots all ancient prejudices; to silence shrines, sanctified by the veneration of ages as oracular; to consign all those gorgeous temples to decay, and all those images to contempt; to wean the people from every barbarous and dissolute amusement." * * *

"But in one respect it is impossible now to conceive the extent to which the apostles of the *crucified* Jesus shocked all the feelings of mankind. The public establishment of Christianity, the adoration of Ages, the reverence of nations, has thrown around the *cross* of Christ an indelible and inalienable sanctity. No effort of the imagination can dissipate the illusion of dignity which has gathered round it; it has been so long dissevered from all its coarse and humiliating associations, that it cannot be cast back and desecrated into its state of opprobrium and contempt. To the most daring unbeliever among ourselves, it is the symbol, the absurd, and irrational, he may conceive, but still the ancient and venerable symbol of a powerful and influential religion: what was it to the Jew and to the heathen? the basest, the most degrading punishment of the lowest criminal! the proverbial terror of the wretched slave! it was to them, what the most despicable and revolting instrument of public execution is to us. Yet to the cross of Christ, men turned from deities in which were embodied every attribute of strength, power, and dignity. In an incredibly short space of

time multitudes gave up the splendour, the pride and the power of paganism, to adore a Being who was thus humiliated beneath the meanest of mankind, who had become, according to the literal interpretation of the prophecy, *a very scorn of men, and an outcast of the people.*"—Milman's *Bampton Lectures*, Lect. vi., p. 279.

NOTE C, REFERRED TO AT PAGE 129.

"THE narrative, which is found in three of the Evangelists, of the transaction in the Country of the Gadarenes, is, as I have said, perfectly decisive. It fully answers the purpose for which I have been supposing it designed, of proving, to those who believe the Sacred Books, and understand the narratives in the sense in which the Writers evidently *meant, and expected, to be understood*, the reality of demoniacal possession. And hence it is that those who are resolved to maintain at all hazards, a contrary theory, are driven to seek some mode of explaining away this narrative; in doing which, their ingenuity, and, I may add, their credulity, are not a little taxed.

As for the temptation of our Lord in the wilderness, that, they say—as there were no witnesses of it, so that it could be known only from his own account—we are to understand as having been described by Him to his Disciples in "figurative language," which they (as well as nearly all other Christians for eighteen centuries at least) understood—as *He must have known* they would—literally. He—the Heaven-sent Teacher of THE TRUTH, led his disciples (according to this theory) to believe that He was tempted by a personal agent, even Satan, although there was no such Being concerned!

But the other narrative—that of the transaction among the Gadarenes—requires, if possible, still greater violence to be done to the words of the Sacred Writers, in order to explain it away. And I have thought it right to notice here one of these attempted interpreta-

tions—offensive as the very mention of it may be, to some of my readers—because it may be usefully instructive to perceive, and to reflect on, the sad fact, that there is no extravagance too wild for men not deficient in learning and intelligence, and not destitute of religious and moral notions, if determined to maintain, *somehow or other*, a certain pre-conceived theory. They will support it by sound and fair arguments, if such are to be found: if not, by weaker ones: and, if these fail, by *anything*, however absurd; rather than abandon an untenable position.

The interpreters then to whom I am now alluding, (certain German writers, whose notions have, I believe, been adopted by some English,) explain the transaction by saying that it was the Maniac himself—the man who *imagined* himself possessed by a legion of demons, who, in a paroxysm of frenzy, (of course, *before* his cure,) drove the herd of swine over a precipice into the lake, and who, immediately *afterwards*, was cured of his malady by Jesus!

Now this is completely at variance with the narratives of all three of the Evangelists. For they all agree in describing the herd as driven over the precipice *after* the demons were gone out of the man; that is, after his cure was completed. And the whole transaction must have passed before the eyes of the Apostles and other Disciples who were in attendance on Jesus, as well as of the keepers of the swine: so that we must, if this theory is received, suppose all of these to have combined to falsify the narrative in a most important point.*

No one,—even a retired student, more conversant

* Matthew's Gospel mentions *two* demoniacs, and the other Evangelists, only one: but this is an inaccuracy—on whichever side—of no moment as to the *essential* points of the transaction.

I confess, however, that I know not how to account for Matthew's mention, in several places, of two, where the other Evangelists plainly speak of *one:* as, where

with books than with the habits of different kinds of animals—can doubt that it must have been at least a very strange and striking spectacle to see a man driving —not such animals as sheep, but a herd of two thousand swine,—not from one field to another, but, over a cliff into a lake! One can hardly pronounce perhaps what is or is not *possible* to be effected by a furious maniac, with terrific cries and frantic gestures. But certainly, if such a thing *had* taken place, it must have been what none of the spectators could be deceived in, and must have made a strong impression on them. Yet *all* the Evangelists agree that no such thing did take place; all giving a totally different account of the transaction.

Moreover they all agree in saying that the Gadarenes came and "besought Jesus to depart from their Country;" considering that it was *He* who had caused the destruction of the herd. But if the keepers of the swine had seen that it was the *maniac himself* who had done them this damage, they could never have felt this displeasure and dread, towards the very person who had *cured* that maniac. One might as well suppose they would have been displeased with a man for quenching a destructive fire, or stopping a raging pestilence.

We must suppose, therefore—according to the above theory—this portion also of the narrative to have been a fabrication.

Now one may fairly ask any one who believes the Evangelists to have falsified their history in such mate-

---

two blind men are mentioned, instead of one, as being cured, at Jericho.

Perhaps, if Matthew's Gospel was originally written in Syriac-Hebrew, (as is generally supposed by the learned,) there may have been something in his expressions that misled the translator into Greek, as to the number. Certain it is that there is at least one passage in which Matthew could not possibly have *meant* two things: where it is said that "they brought the ass *and* the colt, and set Jesus *on them:*" επανω αυτων.

rial points, whether he can trust them at all, for anything? and whether such witnesses would be received at all in any Court, or rejected with indignant scorn?

To take a parallel case: suppose some witnesses to declare that a certain individual had been seized and carried off as a slave, by a band of murderous robbers, who compelled him to aid them in their outrages; that at length he *escaped* out of their hands; and that *after* this escape, they went, without him, and committed some remarkable burglary, or other such crime; and then, suppose it to come out afterwards, that it was *he himself* who committed that very crime, and that those witnesses had actually seen him with his own hands breaking open the house, and robbing and murdering the inmates; would not any man of common sense and common honesty decide that they were utterly unworthy of credit, and deserved to be branded with infamy?

Any one then who adopts the theory I have been alluding to, may as well go on to maintain that the tempest which—just before—our Lord is said to have quelled with a word, had abated at length, as all storms do; and that his Disciples represented it as having *suddenly* ceased, on his speaking; and that the sick persons He was said to have cured, some of them had recovered long before, and some, long afterwards, and some, not at all: and in short, that the Disciples *originally joined* Jesus for *no reason at all*, and afterwards fabricated the accounts of his mighty works.

I have dwelt at greater length on this theory than in itself it deserves, to show how decisively this narrative proves the reality of demoniacal agency, if understood in the plain sense of the words, and as the Writers *knew* they *would* be understood; since those who are resolved at all hazards to reject the doctrine, are obliged to explain away the narrative by resorting to the most extravagantly forced interpretations, and the most revolting conjectures.

LECTURE VII.

Temptations of our Saviour and his followers.

THE great "Author and Finisher of our faith" is set forth in Scripture as "our example, that we should follow his steps." Not only is He described as a "High Priest who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities," so that we may "come boldly to seek help in time of need,"* but we are also expected to "learn of Him,"—to "let the same mind be in us which was also in Him." And we have to learn, among other things, how to withstand those trials, and resist those enemies, to which He—as well as ourselves—was exposed. For He was, we are told, "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

Now, to this end, it is plainly necessary that we should be acquainted with, and reflect on, and rightly understand, his temp-

* Heb. iv. 15, 16.

tations; since otherwise, we cannot imitate Him, as we are directed to do. The benefit of his example, which is one of the great objects for which He came into the World, is lost to men, in proportion as they either neglect to contemplate the trials He was exposed to, or take an erroneous view of them.

One of these trials, and doubtless, one that is especially alluded to when He is described as "in all points tempted like as we are," was that which we find recorded in three of the Evangelists as taking place in the wilderness, where He was exposed, previously to the opening of his Ministry, to the direct assaults of Satan.*

This is not one of those transactions which are mentioned incidentally, in the course of the narrative of other matters. The history of his Ministry itself would have been complete without it. And again, it is not a transaction which the Sacred Writers had witnessed, and which they might be supposed to have mentioned merely because they had witnessed it; but it must

* Matt. iv.; Mark, i.; Luke, iv.

have been brought to their knowledge by Jesus Himself, either relating it orally to his disciples while He remained on Earth, or else communicating it by the inspiration of his Spirit, afterwards.

It must have been recorded therefore for some special and important purposes. And among these purposes must have been, no doubt, those which I have just alluded to; namely, to show us that our great Master was tempted, like us; and to afford us the benefit of his example, inasmuch we also are to be, in proportion to our strength, tried, as He was, and have a promise of the aid of his Spirit "which helpeth our infirmities."

I have remarked above, that unless we would represent Jesus and his Apostles as deceivers, we must understand the narrative of the Temptation as a true one, and not as a poetical figure of speech, or a parable, representing Satan as a real personal agent while in reality no such Being had any part in the transaction, or ever existed at all. For, even supposing the language employed to be such as might, conceivably, bear such an interpretation, still Jesus and his Dis-

ciples *knew* that their hearers would *not* so interpret it, but would understand them in the obvious sense. And he who speaks that which is false in the sense in which he is aware he will be understood, is manifestly a deceiver; not the less, though he may have some hidden meaning which is true. I added also that he whose moral notions are so lax as to attribute this deception to those he professes to reverence as God's messengers, is not likely to scruple practising the like himself; so that, for aught we know, his own professed belief in the Gospel may be merely a figure of speech and may signify, according to his own secret interpretation, that he looks on it as an "illusion."

But taking the narrative in question as a true account of a real transaction, it furnishes, among other things, a proof (as was remarked in the last Lecture) that the agency of evil-spirits cannot be explained, —in all cases at least—as the fancy of a diseased imagination. The possession of the herd of swine by the demons, and the temptation of the Son of God, are the two cases which,—I observed—preclude all such

explanation, and which were doubtless recorded, partly, for that very purpose. Whatever effects may be produced in *men* by a diseased imagination, the brute-animals, in the one case, were as much *below* that influence, as, in the other case, the Son of God was *above* it.

But when I speak of understanding the narratives of the Evangelists as literally true, I do not mean that we are to interpret them according to the traditions or fanciful conjectures of the Vulgar. Some absurd notions which are afloat respecting the agency of evil-spirits, and which have tended to throw ridicule on the subject, and to encourage a total disbelief of the doctrine,—these are so far from being derived from Scripture, that they are, in some points, even opposite to what Scripture teaches. And yet, on this, and on several other subjects,* one may find persons entertaining such and such notions which they themselves believe to have been taught in Scripture, though on examination it will appear that they are founded on groundless tradi-

* Some instances are noticed in Lectures V. and X., on a Future State.

tions and fanciful conjectures, mixed up with Scripture.

For instance, one may see popular works illustrated with plates, in which Satan is represented as appearing (both to our Lord in the wilderness, and on other occasions) in a frightful and revolting form, as if on purpose to proclaim his real character, and to warn every one against listening to him. The Son of God is thus represented as tried by a temptation which would have been no trial at all even to the weakest of mankind: and a Spirit of great subtlety—who, according to Scripture, is accustomed to "transform himself into an Angel of Light" —is represented as more foolishly simple than the silliest of mortals.

But the Gospel-narrative does not inform us even whether Satan *appeared* at all to our Lord, in bodily form, or merely suggested thoughts to his mind. And if he did appear at all, in person, doubtless it was not in *his own* person, or in any alarming or disgusting shape, but disguised, as Scripture teaches us, as "an Angel of Light."

When it is said that the Sacred Narrative is to be understood as a statement of real

facts, and not as a figure of speech or parable, (because it could not but be understood as real, by those it was written for,) this does not mean that men are not required to exercise their common-sense, and to use attentive care and diligence, in the interpretation of this, or of any other part of Scripture. It was not indeed merely to men of superior learning and ingenuity that these writings are addressed; but they are addressed to rational Beings, who are expected to *use* their reason, and not to interpret one portion of Scripture so as to be at variance with the rest, or so as to be palpably absurd.

Now if evil-spirits be—as Scripture represents—intelligent and crafty tempters, and if Jesus were—as we are assured—"tempted like as we are," it is impossible that Satan could, in his own person, have openly proposed to Him temptations such as could never have deceived even the weakest of ordinary mortals. It is impossible, for instance, that Satan could have thought to prevail over—I do not say, the Son of God, but—even the silliest of mankind, by openly proposing to him to fall down and worship *him*—Satan, *as* Satan;—as the

great enemy of God and Man. We may be sure therefore that in this, and in the other temptations, he "transformed himself into an Angel of Light," by representing his suggestions as of quite a different character from what they really were.

Doubtless, the true state of the case is this: that, in the very brief and compressed narrative of the Evangelists, the temptations are described not, *as originally presented* by the Tempter, but, as *detected*, exposed, and rejected, by Jesus; stripped of the disguise under which they had been offered. And Satan himself is spoken of, not under the form of a holy Angel, as he would naturally present himself, but as made manifest, and exposed in his real character.

And *how* was he thus exposed and detected? Evidently in each case, *by* the character of the temptation itself: even as our Lord Himself afterwards taught his disciples to detect false prophets, who came "in sheep's clothing, but inwardly were ravening wolves:" "by their *fruits*," said He, "ye shall know them."

But the whole benefit of Christ's example is utterly lost to us, if we misapprehend the

character of the temptations He underwent, and of those to which we ourselves are liable. If an evil-spirit were, avowedly in his own proper person, to appear to any one of you, and to suggest to you to enrich or otherwise benefit yourself by doing something—suppose, something apparently quite harmless—which it was completely in your power to do, doubtless there is no one who would not, when *thus* solicited, shrink from the act with abhorrence and dread. You would *recognize* the *temptation*, *by* the *tempter*. But the temptations which actually occur, in our case, (and doubtless, in that of our Lord) are the reverse of this. If you are tempted to enrich or to gratify yourself by some unlawful or dishonourable act,—by fraud, or by appropriating in any way what is another's,—you are to recognise the tempter *by* the *temptation*;—you are to know, not (as in the former case) the fruit by the tree, but the tree by its fruits. And so, no doubt it was, with the Lord Jesus.

Thus, in the first instance, Jesus, when suffering from hunger, receives the suggestion, to employ for his own convenience the miraculous power which had been designed

for the furtherance of his ministry;—for the establishment of his claim of having come from God, and for the relief of the afflicted. It was suggested to Him to convert the stones of the desert into bread. But He resisted the suggestion, as knowing that He was not in danger of really perishing through famine, and that it was not for his own relief and comfort that his miraculous powers were to be exerted.

Again, when He was placed—or imagined Himself placed—(it comes to the same: since He could in a moment transport Himself thither) on a pinnacle of the Temple, and it was suggested to Him to cast Himself down unhurt into the midst of the crowd of worshippers below, the real temptation consisted, no doubt, in this; that they would all have been ready to receive Him as the Christ; since the universal expectation of the Jewish people was (and indeed is still) that when the long-looked-for Messiah should come, he would appear *descending from Heaven.** And this accordingly

* They grounded their expectation, no doubt, on a prophecy in Daniel, vii. 13.

But they did not observe that the Prophet speaks

was the "sign from heaven" which we find the scribes continually demanding of Jesus, though they had witnessed so many of his mighty works.

But it was not by conforming to the expectations of the Jewish People that divine wisdom had decreed the kingdom of Heaven should be established. It was not in this way that the superhuman powers of Jesus were to be exercised. And to call on God for a display of his power in some different way from what He has appointed,—to save us from dangers or difficulties in which we have needlessly placed ourselves—this is what is called in Scripture "*tempting* the Lord;"* that is, making trial of Him.

Again, when from a mountain-top Jesus could view with his bodily eyes, vast and wealthy and populous regions, and his imagination in a moment extended to those beyond, many times greater, it was then suggested to his mind that He had it in his power to establish, without resistance, a

of his coming *to*, not *from*, the Most High. The prophecy appears to have been fulfilled in the *Ascension*. See Acts, i. 9.

* Matt. iv. 7.

splendid empire extending over the whole world; and that He would thus be received by his own people—his brethren after the flesh—with rapturous gratitude, and fervent affection, and devoted veneration. On the opposite side was—rejection by the great mass of his own nation, contempt, hatred, persecution, torture, and a most degrading and ignominious death; and all this, not only to Himself, but to the most eminent of his followers also.

It was not merely personal ambition therefore, and the natural wish for personal ease and safety, but some of the most amiable tendencies of human nature, that constituted this temptation;—patriotism, and compassion, and friendship, and the wish to be well-thought of by those one loves. But Jesus knew that the scheme of Divine Providence was quite at variance with all this;—that the Gospel was designed for those only who should *voluntarily* and freely embrace it; and who should hold themselves ready, moreover, to forsake all temporal goods "for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake," and to "take up the Cross," if needful, to follow a lowly, despised, and persecuted

Master. At once therefore He recognized the Tempter by the temptation. "Thou invitest me"—He seems to say—"to abandon, for the sake of this world's goods, the great plan of Man's salvation for which I came into the world, and to attempt to frustrate what I know to be the divine will, at the suggestions of temporal ambition and worldly policy; thou art in fact inviting me to 'fall down and worship' thee, the 'Prince of this World.' Get thee hence, Satan!"

It was on this occasion that the Tempter seems to have been the most completely unveiled, and that he was rejected and defied by name. And accordingly he is described as now desisting, for the present, from his attacks, and "departing for a season." These last words,—which may be rendered either "for a season," or "till a fitting occasion"*—are remarkable as implying that the Tempter would afterwards make fresh attempts. And it is a striking circumstance that we find this very temptation—the one last noticed—apparently, again, in substance, repeated, towards the close of our Lord's Ministry and again rejected as before.

* Luke, iv. 13.

Did Satan, on that other occasion, make his approaches avowedly in his own person, and under some revolting form? Oh no! He employed as his agent one of the Disciples of Jesus;—one of his Apostles;—one of the most distinguished of the Apostles; even Peter, who had just before been pronounced "blessed"* when he had confessed his Master to be "the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Shortly after this confession, when Jesus informed his followers that He was about to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies, who would scourge Him and put Him to death, Peter, we are told, "took Him and began to rebuke Him, saying, be it far from Thee, Lord! there shall no such thing happen unto Thee." "Rebuke" is rather too strong a word to represent the exact sense of the original. The meaning is, that he *remonstrated* with Him,—as one does with a friend who is giving way to low-spirited despondency;—assuring him that there is no ground for such gloomy apprehensions. Peter was looking forward, like the rest of the Jews, including the Disciples, not to a suffering Messiah—not

* Matt. vi. 17.

to the reproach of the Cross, and the ignominy of a crucified Master,—but to a Christ who should establish a splendid temporal kingdom, and triumph over all enemies. These were,—as our Lord expresses it,—"the things that be of men" and not the "things that be of God." They were conformable to men's expectations, and acceptable to human inclinations; but quite at variance with the designs of Divine Providence, and with the pure, and spiritual, and truly divine character of the kingdom of Heaven. The temptation to shrink from the scorn, and hatred, and ignominious death, which awaited Him, and to accept the popularity, and worldly glory, and dominion, that were within his reach, Jesus recognized as the very same temptation that had been formerly presented to Him, and *by* this, recognizes the same Tempter—him whom he designates as "the Prince of this world;" who had so far darkened the mind, and excited the worldly desires, of Peter, as to make him even venture to expostulate with his Lord, and question the truth of his declarations.

Jesus accordingly rebukes him with more

severity than was his usual practice, as being "an offence unto Him;" that is, —according to the Scriptural use of that word,—as putting a stumbling-block or impediment in his way, to prevent his treading the path marked out for Him. And it is remarkable that He rebukes *Satan* in the person of Peter, to denote that He regarded the Apostle as, at that moment, made Satan's instrument; saying (almost in the very words in which He had before rebuked the Tempter in the wilderness), "Get thee behind me, Satan! thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men:" as much as to say, "thou art again suggesting to me to depart from my obedience to the divine will, for the sake of the worldly greatness thou offerest: thou art again inviting me to fall down and worship thee."

It was probably the struggle against this same kind of temptation once more repeated, that constituted our Saviour's "agony" (i.e. struggle*) in the garden,† at the time

* This was the original meaning of the word "agony," which is so used by our translators.

† Luke, xxii. 44.

when He had been warning his Disciples to "watch and pray, that they might not enter into temptation." For we may be sure that the "cup" which He prayed might "pass from Him," could not have been merely the bodily pain, and death, which so many men have endured with unshrinking fortitude.

Very striking, and very interesting to a right-minded Christian, would be all the incidents of our Saviour's life on earth, even if *we* were only so far concerned in them, inasmuch as all He did and suffered was for *our* sake. But on another account also (as I observed above), the narrative of his life is most interesting and important to us, inasmuch as we are—like Him—to be also tried, in proportion to our strength, and are to profit by and copy his example.

But the benefit of that example is lost to those who do not carefully and intelligently study it, and who form such absurd misconceptions as I have above alluded to, respecting the character of the trials He underwent.

Any Christian, again, who studies the New Testament with an earnest application of his mind to it, in order that he may

profit by what he reads, will find, in this, and in the other parts of it, the instruction he seeks for. That "Satan transforms Himself into an Angel of Light,"* he will learn not only from the express declaration of the Apostle Paul, but from the very history of our Lord's own life. And it is thus that we are to be prepared to see through his disguises, and, by divine help, to gain the victory over him. We shall be prepared to distrust specious first-appearances,—to detect evil dressed up into a specious resemblance of good,—to discover the wolf when concealed under sheep's clothing. Our Lord Himself has taught us, by example as well as by precept, to know false doctrines and "deceitful workers" by "their fruits,"—to detect the Tempter by the very character of the temptation.

For instance, one of the earliest corruptions which the wiles of the great Enemy introduced into the christian Church, was the doctrine of the Gnostics [or "Knowers"], as they called themselves, of whom those Nicolaïtans mentioned in the Book of the Revelation,† were a branch. Satan and the

* 2 Cor. xi. 14. † Rev. ii. 6 and 15.

false teachers whom he made his instruments in propagating this heresy, did not, of course, come forward avowedly as enemies of Christ, or without specious pretensions to pre-eminent holiness. They allured incautious hearers, by setting forth the efficacy of faith—by talking of justification through Christ only,—by boasting of their knowledge of the Gospel. They declaimed against the folly of seeking to justify ourselves before God by our own good works. All this true doctrine was the outward show,—the whitening of the Sepulchre,—the sheep's clothing that disguised the wolf within,—the semblance of an Angel of Light into which Satan transforms himself. For, falsehood, and, indeed, evil of any kind, will be, like poison, loathed, when presented unmixed and undisguised. When poison is administered (whether designedly or by accident) it is disguised by a mixture of wholesome food or salutary medicine, or by a resemblance to these. And even so is falsehood received only when mixed up with much that is true, and made to resemble truth.

How then were those false prophets to be

detected? By applying our Lord's own rule, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." When these men taught their followers to take no pains, and to feel no anxiety, about their moral conduct,—to put away all self-distrust,—all watchfulness against sin, and assured them that, being God's elect, nothing they could do could ever deprive them of his favor,—and that when indulging unrestrained in a vicious life, they "had no sin,"*—that is, that, in *them*, nothing would be accounted sin,—when such was their teaching, any plain single-hearted Christian was enabled to judge of the tree by its fruits, and at once to exclaim, "get thee hence, Satan!" He had only to recollect, and to compare with such doctrine, our Lord's own words and those of the beloved Disciple: "if ye love me, keep my commandments:" "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that *doeth* righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous: he that committeth sin is of the Devil:" and "Every one that

* Eph. i.; John, i. 8.

hath this hope on Christ, purifieth himself even as He is pure."

No *sect* indeed under the *name* of Nicolaïtans or Gnostics exists at this day.* But our spiritual foe is ever ready,—as soon as one disguise has been exposed,—to come forward anew, in another, under some fresh transformation "into an Angel of Light."

Let not therefore any mere change of names lull the Christian of the present day into a false security against such an error as misled many of the early Christians, revived under some altered shape.

Again, what can be a more specious form to assume than that of zeal for God's honour, and for Gospel-truth, and anxiety to propagate that truth, and detestation of all

* In my own memory however, and to *my own knowledge*, christian Ministers have taught from the pulpit that it is not only foolish but impious, as arguing a distrust of God, for a man to examine his own life and to feel any dread of falling into sin; any such anxiety and care and alarm being a delusion of Satan! and again, that God's People ought to feel much grief at the sinfulness of the ungodly, but none at all, at any sins of their own, because God suffers his own People to fall into grievous sins, on purpose to make them humble!

Incredible as it may (I hope) seem to some of my readers, what I state is a fact.

false religion? It is under this disguise that the great Enemy of God and Man has introduced persecution and intolerance.

It is said to have been formerly the practice in christian places of worship, for all the males of the congregation, on the recital of the Apostles' Creed, to stand up and draw their swords, in token of their zeal for the true Faith, and of their readiness to fight in its defence. These were professedly the servants of Him who bade his erring Disciple "put up his sword into its sheath;" who declared that his "Kingdom was not of this world;" who, "when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, threatened not;" and who sent forth his followers, not to subjugate, but to "teach all nations;" "in meekness instructing them that oppose themselves." Such was the Master whom these men professed to serve: but to judge of them "by their fruits," one would rather have taken them for worshippers of the heathen god Mars.

Precisely such a custom as I have just alluded to, does not now, I believe, exist anywhere; but if any one should thence infer that there is now no risk of his being

betrayed into intolerance under the shape of zeal for God's glory, his confidence of being safe from any such danger exposes such a man to the greatest danger.

Even at the present day, and in this very Country, you may hear people talk of its being the duty of the Civil-Government "to provide for the *good*,—the greatest good—of its subjects," by putting down all false religion, and enforcing the profession of the true Faith. And as every Ruler, whether Pagan, Mahometan, or Christian, whether Protestant or Romanist, &c., will of course assume that *his own* is the true Faith, and those opposed to it, erroneous, hence, this principle goes to establish universal intolerance. Now, not only is the tendency of secular coercion in religious matters, to produce insincere profession, instead of sincere conviction, but moreover, its operation is in *all* cases unfavourable to the cause of the pure Gospel. For in many Countries—probably the far greater number—that very Religion would be oppressed or discountenanced. And in other Countries again, where the religion attempted to be enforced by Law was, in many points,

nearer to the truth, still it would, in one most essential point, be completely opposed to the precepts and to the practice of Christ and his Apostles. For *they* evidently designed that their Religion should be embraced voluntarily and sincerely, and not forced (that is, the outward profession of it) on any one.

But again, you may meet with persons who will exclaim, "What! should we tolerate those who would extend no toleration to *us?* Such and such a Church or sect would treat us, if they had it in their power, with even more severity than we propose to exercise on *them.*"

A stranger might almost suspect that such persons—boasting, as they often do, of their own liberty to read the Scriptures, and of their deep veneration for them—had a *different* New-Testament from ours; and that, in *their* edition, Jesus Christ is represented as *sanctioning* the maxim of "thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy," and "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth;" and as teaching, not "whatsoever ye *would that men should do* unto you—but, whatsoever ye *think that*

men would do unto you—even so do unto them."

Another evil which has crept in under the disguise of religious zeal, is the practice of *pious frauds*;—of teaching men, for their supposed good, what we do not ourselves believe, or only such *parts* of what we believe to be revealed in the Gospel as we conceive the people to be worthy of. Such practices one may find even distinctly defended and recommended in the present day, under the titles of "Reserve," "Economy," and "Double-doctrine." The father of lies has induced men to fancy that they can serve the cause of the God of Truth by disingenuous artifice, trickery, and deception!

To enumerate and describe all the devices by which the great enemy of Man seeks to delude the unwary, transformed into an Angel of Light—that is, presenting evil under the semblance of good—would be to go through almost every branch of duty and every kind of practical error. Those which I have now mentioned I have brought forward merely as specimens, in order to

illustrate the principle on which we are in all cases to judge and act.

I will only advert, in conclusion, to one circumstance which very strongly indicates the degree and the manner in which the Tempter seeks—and too often with success—to blind men's judgment in all that especially appertains to *himself*. I mean, that the words "immorality" and "vice" are not commonly applied to those particular vices which are the most emphatically diabolical; such as slander and lying, pride, unchristian bitterness and unfairness towards opponents, bigoted party-spirit, and such like. Even those who decidedly disapprove and censure such conduct, and even those who are not themselves tainted with these sins, will yet not usually apply to them the terms "vicious" or "immoral." They will speak of some men "of pure *moral* character, and free from *vice*," as being chargeable with such sins. The words "vicious" and "immoral" are commonly limited to sensual excess, or to some other such sins as—though destructive of the soul's health, and such as we may well conceive the Tempter ready to seduce men

into,—are yet not so truly parts of his *own* character—not so emphatically Satanic—as those others to which, as I have said, the term vice is not commonly applied.

But beware of being, in this or in any other point, misled by words and names. And beware of being deluded by specious descriptions or by outward appearances. Judge of each principle and each disposition of mind; by the fruits it naturally tends to produce, and compare each act, and thought, and feeling, with the teaching and the example of our Lord and his Apostles. The Scriptures in which these are recorded must be studied, not for the purpose of discovering some plea to justify the conduct you are, on each occasion, most inclined to, but in order to guide your conduct, and to improve and elevate your character. And seek by prayer the promised aid of God's Holy Spirit to aid you in that study, and to guard you against the snares that beset your path.

But we must watch also,—as our great Master has Himself warned us—we must watch as well as pray, that we enter not into temptation. And if we thus strive to

comply with his directions and to follow his steps, we need not fear that He, our all-powerful Friend, will ever fail to send us, according to his promise, divine support and deliverance. He who, for our sake, encountered and endured so much while on Earth in bodily person, is now ready and "able to save to the uttermost those who come unto God by Him." And "we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."*

* Heb. iv. 15, 16.

LECTURE VIII.

Prevailing errors relative to Satanic Agency.

THE dangers to which the Christian's course is exposed existed even in the life-time of the Apostles themselves. Even in the primitive Churches false teachers arose, against whom Paul and the other Apostles frequently take occasion to warn their People. It may seem very strange to us that this should have been the case; considering that the first generation of Christians had among them those inspired men who had been companions of the Lord Jesus, and whom He had endued with miraculous powers. But so it was. And it is recorded, doubtless, in part for our encouragement, to show that as we are called on to "take heed to ourselves,"* to avoid being misled, so also were the earliest Christians exposed to a like trial, and re-

* Acts, xx. 28.

quired to exercise equal vigilance. "For I know," says Paul, in the passage I have just referred to, "that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them! Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." And again, he warns the Corinthians,* that they must expect to meet with "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into Apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself also is transformed into an Angel of Light: therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness." It is to be expected, he says, that these deceitful teachers should put forth false pretensions to impose on the unwary, since even "Satan himself transforms himself," (that is the exact rendering of the original) into an Angel of Light.

I have said that the precise sense of the Apostle's words, is not, as in our version,

* 2 Cor. xi. 13.

"is transformed," but, "transforms himself,"—*assumes* the disguise of an Angel of Light. And our translators accordingly do so render the same word, just above, in this very passage. The Apostle is manifestly speaking not of a transformation produced by some other agent, but of Satan's own artifices in putting on a specious form; and of his ministers feigning to be true Apostles.

In this, and in several other places, Paul (as well as the other Apostles) alludes to the existence and to the artifices of the Tempter as something well known to his hearers, who, he tells them,* "are not ignorant of his devices." And it is plain (as I have already remarked) that his hearers, and those of our Lord, must have understood them (as indeed the great mass of Christians always have) to be speaking literally of a real personal agent, and not giving a mere figurative description of evil in the abstract. Christ therefore and his Apostles could have been no other than deceivers, if they were conscious that what they taught was, in the sense in which they knew that their hearers must under-

* 2 Cor. ii. 11.

stand them, not true. And what must be the moral principles of those who can attribute such deception to God's messengers, I leave any honest man to judge.

But you will not fail, I think, to perceive, on reflection, that it is just what one would naturally expect, that an insidious and crafty adversary, such as Satan is represented in Scripture, should endeavour to throw men off their guard, first, by inducing them if possible, to disbelieve his existence altogether,—to explain away as mere figures of speech all the declarations of Scripture on the subject,—and to flatter themselves that they *have* no such enemy to guard against: and, in the next place, by leading those who do believe in his existence, to mistake the character of their danger,—to be alarmed in the wrong place,—and to feel least apprehension precisely where there is the most occasion for it; when he "transforms himself into an Angel of Light;" that is, when he conceals his real approaches, and disguises the character of the temptations offered.

And it is worth observing, that, whether a man believes or disbelieves the Scripture-

accounts of evil-spirits,—indeed, whether he receives or rejects entirely the christian Scriptures—still he cannot but acknowledge the truth of what I have now been saying. I mean, he cannot but perceive and admit that an intelligent and malignant Spirit, *supposing* such a Being to exist, *would* be likely to proceed in the way I have described. Such a Being, it is evident, would endeavour to seduce, and not to alarm men; and would seek to throw them off their guard, by inducing them either to disbelieve his existence, or else to expect his attacks, at the times, and in the manner, in which those attacks are *not* made, and to remain in careless and groundless security precisely when their danger is the greatest. And it is wonderful to what a degree many men are, in this way, misled;—what absurd notions they often entertain on this subject; such as, in any other case, they would themselves reject with scorn.

The absurd notions respecting the agency of Satan which are afloat, tend, in two ways, to throw men off their guard against him: first, by misleading such as hold those notions; and secondly, by inducing others to

disbelieve altogether the very existence of a Being of whom they hear such groundless and incredible tales. For, rash and hasty reasoners seldom trouble themselves to draw distinctions between what is and is not credible, in the accounts they hear, and to winnow the wheat from the chaff, but believe or disbelieve in the lump; either admitting the false along with the true, or rejecting both together.

I have said that some popular notions which are afloat on this subject, are such as would, on any other, be derided as undeserving a moment's attention. For instance, we know that dishonest men often seek to entrap the unwary by selling articles made of base metal disguised so as to resemble pure gold or silver; and in various other ways obtaining a high price for something that is in reality worthless, but which they represent as of great value: or, again, by inducing men, under false pretences, to enter into ruinous engagements, of which the true character is concealed from them. But if we were told of any one *proclaiming himself* to be a fraudulent dealer,—or going about professing his design of ruining those

who transacted business with him, and openly proposing to them to part with their most valuable property for the merest trifles, —we should at once conclude such a person to be insane, and should feel confident that no one would listen to him.

And yet there have been men so silly as to believe that evil-spirits,—Beings which they suppose to possess superhuman sagacity—have the folly to come forward in their own persons, and to propose openly to a man such an absurd bargain:—to offer him wealth or some other worldly advantage, avowedly in exchange for his soul, and with a distinct agreement for the formal surrender of his eternal salvation as the price to be paid!

Too often, I fear, is such a wretched bargain, in reality, made: but never, we may be sure, was it openly proposed. Cheaply indeed, for the vile dross of present gain or gratification, does Man sometimes barter his eternal jewel,—his soul, in exchange for which it would not (says our Lord) "profit him if he should gain the whole World." But no one, I conceive, would be so mad as to agree to such a purchase if it were dis-

tinctly proposed to him, and the real character of the transaction explained. And still less can we suppose that a subtle Tempter —a Being of superhuman intelligence— would, with more than childish silliness, openly avow his designs, and plainly lay before men the ruin into which he designs to draw them. And yet, on this point men have been so deluded—deluded, we may suppose, by himself, the very father of lies—as to attribute to *him* those very warnings—that very exposure of the naked truth,—which the Scriptures represent as proceeding from the God of mercy. It is that God who, by his inspired messengers, sets before men, plainly, the fatal consequences of transgression, and shows them what they are really doing when they violate his laws. The Tempter, on the contrary, is occupied in doing the very *reverse* of what vulgar superstitions attribute to him. He labours, as might have been expected, to conceal,—to deny—to extenuate, the danger of sin, and to delude his victims into false notions as to what it is they are doing. "Ye *shall not* surely die," was his language to our first Parents. It was

not Satan, but God, who had set before them the real consequences of transgression. And yet popular Legends, and the belief of the superstitious Vulgar, attribute to an evil-spirit those distinct warnings, and those plain declarations of the truth, which in reality proceed from God Himself.

Again, what would a robber or an assassin give, think you, for the power of making himself *invisible?* As it is, they resort to the most secret hiding-places,—they skulk in darkness,—they assume disguises,—they use all contrivances (when about to attack those they cannot overpower by open force) to make their approaches unseen, unheard, and unsuspected. But no one can doubt that if such men had the power of becoming invisible, they would not fail to use it for the perpetration of their crimes. Never, certainly, would they, or do they, show themselves, voluntarily, so as to alarm into flight or resistance those whom they wish to take by surprise. And yet many popular tales are afloat among the superstitious Vulgar, of evil-spirits assuming a bodily form, and openly appearing before men; sometimes, when presenting temptations to them, some-

times in frightful shapes, as if on purpose to alarm them.* They are popularly supposed to dwell amid the fires of burning mountains, or to haunt burying-grounds in the night-time, or to appear beside the death-beds, or the graves, of wicked men, and to show themselves when invoked at midnight by fantastic conjurations and magical ceremonies. And they are believed to confer on those who thus apply to them, superhuman powers of witchcraft, in return for a formal renunciation of their baptism, and surrender of their souls.† And accordingly, in the darker Ages of the World, (I fear the superstition is not quite out of date, even now, among some of the gross-minded and illiterate,) many a harmless wretch was persecuted on suspicion of thus "dealing with the Devil:" and many a pretended fortune-teller or "cunning-man" for his own profit, kept his foolish neigh-

* The legend of the temptations of St. Antony (often taken as a subject for painters) is one specimen out of many that might be referred to.

† There was, in New-England, not long after its settlement, a sort of epidemic infatuation on this subject; of which accounts may be found in histories of that Country.

bours in awe by countenancing this belief respecting his own intercourse with "familiar-spirits."

In the darkest ages (and remnants of that darkness may even now be met with) any great superiority attained by any one, in Science or in Art, was commonly attributed to a compact with the Evil-One: any discovery, through the bounty of Providence, of a new Law of Nature, and of the beneficial application of it in Medicine, or in any other art, was ascribed to demoniacal agency. And men have been found (even in the nineteenth century) so weakly superstitious as to dread to avail themselves of such discoveries, and to employ the gifts of Providence, lest they should unconsciously be indebted to Satan. They are so ignorant of the very first principles of morality as not to perceive that the good or bad character of any act depends on the *intention* of the agent. He who *intends* and attempts to invoke the aid of evil demons, incurs the same guilt, however absurd, and however fruitless, his incantations may be. And, on the other hand, if we are *intending* to avail ourselves of God's gifts, for good pur-

poses, we should not be the less his faithful servants, even supposing it true that He sometimes compels evil Beings to further his beneficent purposes.

But, according to those vulgar superstitions which I have been alluding to, Beings supposed to possess superhuman knowledge and cunning, are represented as taking the very way to defeat their own object, by acting with such open simplicity and childish folly, as we should at once perceive to be utterly incredible if we were told it respecting any evil-doer of our own feeble Race!

Does it not then seem likely that these absurd superstitions are contrivances of the great Enemy himself, to draw off men's attention from real dangers, by fixing it on imaginary ones? For, next to the belief that there *is* no enemy at all to be dreaded, the most likely way to put men off their guard, is, to raise a false alarm, and occupy them with empty and imaginary fears. Such, we well know, is in war the procedure of any skilful general; who always endeavours, by what is called a feint, or false-attack, to draw off his enemy's forces from the point really assailed. And such, we

must suppose, would be the natural and obvious procedure of any kind of adversary, possessing intelligence even only equal to that of an ordinary man.

In truth, it is not easy to account for the fact, that men not destitute of common-sense in other matters, should have been brought to believe anything so silly and contradictory as many things which *have* been believed, on this subject, unless we suppose their minds deluded and bewildered by the devices of the father of lies; who will of course strive more especially to mislead men in all that relates to himself. It certainly is not strange that he should *attempt*—though it is truly wonderful he should ever *succeed* in the attempt—to bring rational Beings to such a pitch of superstitious credulity, as to believe that Spirits of superior intelligence and subtlety are foolish enough to avow their designs, and to warn a man distinctly of the consequences of what he is urged to do: and that they appear to men in bodily form, and terrify them with horrid shapes. If men can but be brought to entertain such absurd notions as these, Satan will be least dreaded, and

least guarded against, when closest at hand and most actively employed, unseen.

But common-sense will teach any one who will but listen to it, *when*, and *where*, and *how*, evil-spirits are most actively employed. They are not occupied with the dead *corpses* of bad men: with these, Satan's work is already done. It is not with the carcase of the dead sinner, but with the *mind* of the living one that they are engaged. Nor can a man be secured from being made their prey by committing his mouldering clay to consecrated ground after his death; but by having, during his lifetime, a consecrated soul;—a "clean heart, and a right spirit within him:" not, by sheltering his lifeless body, after his time of tial is past, within a Place of Worship, which he respects as the Temple of God; but by "offering himself a *living* sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God," and making his body while alive, a "living stone" of the "Temple of the Holy Ghost."

Let no one either hope, or fear, that the Devil is to be raised in bodily shape, in the oneliness and darkness of midnight, by fantastical conjurations *designed* for that

purpose. He can, indeed, be easily raised; but not in that way. He and his agents are indeed at hand when called on; and they continually *are* called on, by those who are least thinking of them. But they do not assume a revolting and alarming form. Satan himself "transforms himself into an Angel of Light." He is ready under any specious and alluring disguise; and as soon as one is seen through, or suspected, will resort to another. It is not in darkness, and solitude, and silence, that he is oftener at work than in the bustle and business of cheerful day;—in the crowded Market, and the revelling Fair, not less than in the secret resorts of the thief, the adulterer, or the assassin. The incantations which invoke him the most effectually, are the songs and light talk of drunkards,—the oath and curses, and revilings of the quarrelsome,—the insidious slanders of the malicious,—the flattering and corrupting talk of the seducer,—the lies and false professions of the crafty and fraudulent. These, and such as these, come out of the "evil treasure of an evil heart" already corrupted through the devices of Satan; and they

give proof to him that his wiles are, thus far, successful, and that he may advance to still bolder and further attacks, till he has gained complete dominion over the miserable heart which admits him, and which will become more and more enslaved to the "unclean Spirit" within it, the longer that dominion continues.

I have alluded to the superstitious notion that men may be in some degree protected against the power of the Evil-One by having their lifeless corpses placed in some supposed holy spot. But this is only one of a whole class of superstitions tending the same way. Of all superstitions there are—as I have already remarked—none more likely to be devised and encouraged by the great Deceiver than those that relate to himself; whether in the way, just mentioned, of raising false alarms, or again, of suggesting false means of protection against him. Thus, besides the superstitious notion now alluded to, we find, in the darkest Ages of the Church, and in the most unenlightened districts, various imaginary safeguards against the power of evil-spirits, resorted to, and trusted to with absurd cre-

dulity. Such are the sprinklings with holy water,—the frequent crossings,—the muttering of mystical forms of words,—charms written on slips of parchment or paper,—relics of saints,—and the like, which you must have heard of.

At one time men were led (as I pointed out in a former Lecture) to pay direct adoration to evil demons as their gods. When this branch of superstition was overthrown by the Gospel, the next attempt of the Enemy (and but too successful a one) was to corrupt the christian worship. The Founder of our Faith, and his Apostles, taught men to "worship God in spirit and in truth," and *thus* to seek aid against "the crafts and assaults of the Devil." But *he* taught them to mutter exorcisms and prayers in an unknown tongue. The Lord Jesus Himself, and the most eminent of his Disciples* are proposed as examples for Christians to follow. Was it then by seeking to imitate the goodness of their *lives* that their superstitious admirers in after Ages sought (and alas! still seek) protection from evil? No; but by carry-

* 1 Cor. iv. 16.

ing with them locks of their hair, or shreds of their garments!—not by seeking to "crucify the Old Adam, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts," but by bending in adoration before chips of the supposed "true Cross;" as if these things could have a spiritual efficacy!

Was it by studying the Holy Scriptures, "which are able to make us wise unto salvation," that men thought to be fortified against the power of the Wicked One? No; but by hanging round their necks what are called "Gospels," i.e., slips of parchment with passages of Scripture inscribed on them, carefully folded up, and never meant to be read.

Now if any one should be found, who thought to make a voyage in safety, by having on board the ship a Chart of the coasts he was to pass, shut up in a chest, and never consulted;* or who should think

* And let it be remembered that the Chart would be of no more use to the Mariner than when shut up in a chest, if he merely cast his eyes over it, without seeking to understand it, or without steering his course by it. I mention this, because there are some who think it a duty, and a pious act, to read, at certain stated times, a Chapter of the Bible, without endea-

to support life without food, by carrying about with him the figure of a loaf of bread carved in stone; or to recover his health by wearing round his neck the prescription of a skilful physician, instead of taking the medicine prescribed, we should at once conclude him to be a madman or an idiot. And yet he would be doing nothing more absurd than those childish superstitions I have been alluding to.

May we not reasonably conclude that it is by the father of lies himself, that rational Beings have been led into such surpassing folly?

And now I would ask of you, in conclusion, one question respecting all the remarks and reasons I have laid before you, in this, and in some of the foregoing Lectures,—not, certainly, for the sake of inspiring vain terrors, or of gratifying idle curiosity, but with a view to your own safety,—to your eternal welfare; I would ask you whether

vouring to *learn* anything from what they read,—without studying to understand it, or to apply it to their own improvement. To them the *words* of Scripture, whether in a strange language, or in their own, are no more than empty sounds, or mere black marks on white paper.

all that I have been saying appears to you a matter of merriment?—something calculated to form a good joke, and nothing more? or whether it is matter of serious and of great importance?

How common it is, you must well know, to find Satan and his angels, and everything connected with them,—including the "everlasting fire prepared" for them and for those who are seduced by them, considered as something ludicrous,—as something that can hardly be mentioned or alluded to with gravity,—as something that not only excites mirth when incidentally referred to, but is even frequently forced in, for the joke's sake, and made to furnish a subject for pleasantry.

Now surely this is a remarkable, and a strange thing; for, generally speaking, right-minded persons—all who have any pure sentiments and delicacy of taste—are accustomed to regard wickedness and misery as most unfit subjects for jesting. They would be shocked at any one who should find *amusement* in the ravage and slaughter perpetrated by a licentious soldiery in a conquered Country; or in the lingering tortures inflicted by wild Indians on their

prisoners; or in the burning of Heretics under the Inquisition. Nay, the very Inquisitors themselves, who have thought it their duty to practise such cruelties, would have been ashamed to be thought so brutal as to regard the sufferings of their victims as a subject of mirth. And any one who should treat as a jest the crimes and cruelties of the French Revolutions, would generally be deemed more depraved than even the perpetrators themselves.

Yet so it is—as you all probably know but too well—that the wickedness, and the misery, past and future, of evil-spirits, and of such of your fellow-creatures as are seduced by them, are commonly treated as a jest!

Now suppose a rational Being—an inhabitant of some other Planet—could visit this our earth, and witness the gaiety of heart with which Satan, and his agents, and his victims, and the dreadful doom reserved for them, and everything relating to the subject, are, by many persons, talked of, and laughed at, and resorted to as a source of amusement, what inference would he be likely to draw?

Doubtless, he would, at first, conclude that no one *believed* anything of all this, but that we regarded the whole as a string of fables, like the heathen mythology, or the nursery-tales of fairies and enchanters, which are told to amuse children. But when he came to learn that these things are not only *true*, but are actually *believed* by the far greater part of those who nevertheless treat them as a subject of *mirth*, what would he think of us then? He would surely regard this as a most astounding proof of the great art, and of the great influence of that Evil Being who can have so far blinded men's understandings, and so depraved their moral sentiments, and so hardened their hearts, as to lead them, not merely to regard with careless apathy their spiritual Enemy, and the dangers they are exposed to from him, and the final ruin of his victims, but even to find *amusement* in a subject of such surpassing horror, and to introduce allusions to it by way of a jest!

May God's Holy Spirit implant in you a more christian temper of mind, and more sober and rational thoughts, and more

humane and purer sentiments! May He deliver you from all those superstitious delusions with which the great Enemy of Man seeks to mislead us, and to turn our attention from real dangers, to false and imaginary alarms! And may you have grace to "watch and pray" as you have need to do, "that you enter not into temptation:" to watch in the right place, and to pray to that all-powerful spiritual Friend who alone is able to deliver and to guard us in every spiritual danger, and who has promised to be at hand to all who earnestly seek Him!

NOTE D.—I have thought it necessary to subjoin a few remarks (more than could have been inserted conveniently in the Lecture) on the importance of endeavouring, and leading others to endeavour, to comply with the apostolic precept to "be always ready to give to every one that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us."* For, besides the tendency in many persons to save themselves the trouble of thought and study, on the plea that "I am a *believer*, and I *could* be no more, by studying evidences: I leave that to any one who may be in doubt,"—besides this, there are, in these days, an unusual number of persons professing faith in the Gospel, and zeal for the reception of it, who dread and deprecate nothing so much as an appeal to evidences in its support. They assail with the bitterest scorn any

* 1 Pet. iii. 15.

one who calls attention to this study; they insinuate plainly that the sacred Writers never appealed to evidence, but demanded assent, without any reason for it, to what they asserted. And they assure us that inquiries of this kind are likely to lead to infidelity!

It seems never to have occurred to them that such an admission, coming from a professed friend to Christianity, tends more to shake men's faith in it than all the attacks of all the avowed infidels in the world put together. For, what would such a writer say of some professed friend coming forward as his advocate, and saying "my friend here is a veracious and worthy man, and there is no foundation for any of the charges brought against him; and his integrity is fully believed in by persons who thoroughly trust him, and who have never thought of reasoning or inquiring about his character at all: but, of all things, *do not make any investigation* into his character; for, the more you inquire and examine, the less likely most people will be to believe in his integrity!"

That such is the tone of some modern writers, not wanting in ability and knowledge, may seem to some of my readers incredible. I will therefore subjoin a specimen from a well-written article in the *Edinburgh Review*, which will serve to give an idea of the tone of such Writers as I allude to:

"The sacred writers have none of the timidity of their modern apologists. They never sue for an assent to their doctrines, but authoritatively command the acceptance of them. They denounce unbelief as guilt, and insist on faith as a virtue of the highest order. In their catholic invitations, the intellectual not less than the social distinctions of mankind, are unheeded. Every student of their writings is aware of these facts, &c. * * * * * They presuppose that vigour of understanding may consist with feebleness of reason; and that the power of discriminating between religious truth and error does not depend chiefly on the culture or on the

exercise of the mere argumentative faculty. The especial patrimony of the poor and illiterate—the Gospel—has been the stay of countless millions who never framed a syllogism. Of the great multitudes who, before and since the birth of Grotius, have lived in the peace and died in the consolations of our Faith, how small is the proportion of those whose convictions have been derived from the study of works like his. Of the numbers who have addicted themselves to such studies, how small is the proportion of those who have brought to the task either learning, or leisure, or industry, sufficient, &c. * * * He who lays the foundation of his faith on such evidences will too commonly end either in yielding a credulous and therefore an infirm assent, or in reposing in a self-sufficient and far more hazardous incredulity."

Here you may observe:

(1stly.) That the author professes—and, we are bound to suppose, sincerely—a high value for the Gospel.

(2ndly.) That he deprecates and derides all appeal to *evidence*, on the ground that the "discrimination between truth and error does not depend chiefly" (and what writer on evidences ever said that it did?) on "the culture of the *mere* argumentative faculty." This is indeed quite true, in other matters besides religious. A jury, for instance, cannot be trusted to give a right verdict, *merely* from their being intelligent men, if they are not also impartially *honest*, and conscientiously desirous to do justice. Therefore, according to the above principle, let us but have *honest* jurymen, and let them give a verdict without hearing any pleadings, or examining any witnesses, and without any evidence at all!

(3rdly.) He implies that every one who "never framed a syllogism" must be incapable of reasoning, and of at all understanding any kind of evidence. If so, there is a vast deal of time wasted in our courts of justice—the barristers, the witnesses, and the judge, all losing their

labour; since probably the greater part of jurymen never "framed a syllogism."

The Author, however, was probably too intelligent to be himself imposed on by so palpable a fallacy as confounding together *logical science*, and the power of understanding and employing an *argument*. For it might as well be assumed that no one could utter a sentence of correct grammatical English who has not *studied grammar*. But he evidently trusts to his readers' overlooking this fallacy; since the whole argument turns on it. When Nicodemus said, "We know that thou art a teacher sent from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him;" and the blind man who had been cured, "if this man were not of God, he could do nothing," they reasoned correctly, though probably they had never so much as heard of a syllogism; nor, perhaps, even of *nouns* and *verbs*, though they spoke grammatically.

(4thly.) He also trusts (which is still more bold) to his readers being strangely ill-acquainted with the New-Testament. For he clearly implies that the sacred Writers made no appeal to evidence, and demanded belief of what they taught, without offering any reason for it! If they *had* taken this course, then, indeed, they might well have been said to "sue for assent to their doctrines." But, in fact, the *very reason why* they "authoritatively command the acceptance of them," is precisely *because* they brought "many infallible *proofs*," which they called on all men either to refute or to admit. The "unbelief which they denounced as guilt" was, not the *requiring* of evidence, but the *rejection* of evidence.

(5thly.) He lays it down that a faith based on *evidence* is "a credulous, and therefore infirm assent," and that to bring forward cogent reasons for our conviction, implies "timidity."

Most people would understand by "credulous" and by "timorous" the very opposite procedure;—belief

without evidence, or *against* it; and the *deprecating* of inquiry as "hazardous," and the exhorting of Christians to hold their faith on just such grounds as the Pagans have for theirs.

It is really strange, and would be, in a less serious subject, quite ludicrous, to find a person who recommends this course, reproaching with *timidity* (of all things!) those who boldly court inquiry, and bring forward strong arguments which they challenge every one either to admit or to answer, or else to stand convicted of perversity. One is reminded of the story of some Indian savages, serving as allies to the British in America, who, when the allied force was attacked by the enemy, ran and took shelter in the woods, while the British troops stood firm under a heavy fire, and repulsed the assailants. It was expected that their Indian friends would have been full of admiration at this display of superior valour; but, on the contrary, *their* interpretation of it was, that the British soldiers were such cowards that they were *too much frightened to run away*. They despised them as having lost all presence of mind, being utterly paralysed with terror!

But though shrinking from evidence and deprecating inquiry do show timidity, the attempt is certainly a daring one, to represent the sacred Writers—whose Works are in every one's hands—as offering no reasons for the faith they demanded. For instance:

"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory, and his disciples believed on Him."

"We know that thou art a teacher sent from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him."

"If I had not done among them the works that none other man did, they had not had sin."

"The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me."

"Him God raised up and showed Him openly; not

to all the people, but to witnesses chosen afore of God, even to us," &c.

"To him bear all the Prophets witness."

"Be always ready to give to every one that asketh you, a reason of the hope that is in you," &c.

And one might add many more passages to the same effect. Yet all of these put together would give but a very inadequate view of the *constant* appeal to evidence which is implied throughout almost every narrative, or discourse, in the Sacred Books. Whole nations, Jews and Gentiles, were invited to *change their religion*, (a step which the Writers I have been alluding to must think always very censurable) at the bidding of one who passed for "the carpenter's son" and of his followers, a few poor fishermen and peasants. That *some* reason *must* have been offered them for doing so, is self-evident. And when the Sacred Historians have plainly given us to understand that the appeal was made not to metaphysical speculations, but to *miracles* performed, and *prophecies* fulfilled, there was no need to repeat continually that such *was* the evidence offered. The whole narrative, and all the discourses and epistles, manifestly *proceed on* that supposition. It is only incidentally, therefore, and occasionally, that allusions are made to the evidences adduced, "concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who went about *doing good*, and *healing all* that were oppressed of the Devil," and to whom "all the *Prophets* bear witness."

Some of my readers may perhaps think that I have bestowed on the passage alluded to, more time and attention than were needed. But I must remind them that it is only taken as a *specimen* of much that is said, in these days, in a lively and specious style, and by persons *professing zeal for Christianity*. Now, to be told by an avowed infidel that the more you inquire into the grounds of your religion, the less likely you

are to believe it,—is nothing. But to have this strongly urged by Writers (and those of no mean ability) who are apparently anxious that the Gospel *should* be believed, is surely not unlikely to mislead the unwary: especially when we recollect that this Writer at least has, to all appearance, misled *himself*. For he seems strongly convinced—if not, of the *truth* of Christianity—at least, of its utility to mankind. And yet he could not—as I have said above—have done anything more calculated to shake the faith of the generality of men. And if—as I there observed—any persons had come forward to defend *his* character in such a style, he would not have failed to exclaim "deliver me from my friends, and I fear not my enemies!"

And moreover, the plan distinctly recommended by such Writers as I have alluded to, is one which has been *acted on*, and which has, in many instances, produced its deplorable fruits, of various kinds. Men have been trained to adhere to whatever religion they were brought up in, without having, or seeking, any grounds for it, but that so they have been told; and all inquiry—all exercise of thought on religious subjects—has been discouraged. They have been exhorted to "hide under a bushel" the lamp of Reason which a kind Providence has bestowed on Man. And what have been the results?

Some—not a few—have listened to the idle tales of crazy enthusiasts, or crafty impostors, who gabbled unmeaning sounds, which they profanely called "the gift of tongues; or who pretended to have discovered in a cave a new Book of Scripture, called the *Book of Mormon* and which they assured their deluded followers contains a divine revelation. And they are believed (why not?) by those who have not only never heard of any reason why *our* Scriptures should be received as containing a divine revelation, but have been taught that it is presumptuous to seek for any, and that they ought to believe whatever is told them.

Others, again, have been strongly assured that the Traditions of those who call themselves "*the* Catholic Church" are of equal authority with Scripture. And this they believe *because* they are *earnestly assured* of it; which is the only ground they ever had, or conceive themselves permitted to have, for believing anything.

Others, again, when exposed to the seduction of infidels, finding that *these* do urge *some*thing in the shape of arguments, and that they have nothing to urge on the opposite side, conclude at once that the religion they have been taught is a fable. For they not only have been supplied by their religious instructors with no "reason for their hope," but have even been assured by them that all inquiry, and all exercise of their rational faculties on the subject, will be likely to lead to infidelity; which is, apparently, an admission that the christian System will not stand examination.

I would earnestly entreat therefore any such teacher as those I have alluded to, to imagine himself confronted, at the Day of Judgment, with some of these misled people, and to consider what answer he would make if these should reproach him with the errors into which they have fallen. Let him conceive them saying, "you have, through false and self-devised views of expediency,—in professed imitation of the Sacred Writers, but in real contradiction of their practice,—sent forth us your weak brethren,—*made* weaker by yourself—as "sheep among wolves," provided with the "harmlessness of the dove," but not, with "the wisdom of the serpent,"—unfurnished with the arms which God's gifts, of Scripture and of Reason, would have supplied to us, and *purposely* left naked to the assaults of various enemies. OUR BLOOD IS ON YOUR HEAD! You must be accountable for our fall."

THE END.

00097184

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 15 March, 2016